

# JEMF QUARTERLY



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## THE JEMF

The primary objectives and purposes of the John Edwards Memorial Forum are to further serious study and public recognition of American traditional and vernacular music (country, western, country and western, old-time, hillbilly, bluegrass, cowboy, mountain, sacred, gospel, race, blues, rhythm and blues, jazz, soul, rock, rock and roll, cajun, conjunto, polka, folk, and ethnic-American) disseminated by commercial media such as print, sound recording, film, radio, and television, and to stimulate research in music forms of such music.

The means of providing such education include, but are not limited to, compiling, publishing and distributing discographical, bibliographical, biographical, and historical material as well as critical analysis; reprinting, with permission, pertinent articles, and reissuing historically significant out-of-print sound recordings; cooperating with sister research, education, and archival aspects of such music, with particular emphasis on this music's cultural meaning and value in defining American experience.

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# JEMF QUARTERLY

## CONTENTS

VOL. 20 SPRING/SUMMER 1984 NO. 73

The American Cowboy: A Note on the Development of a Musical Image, by Sam D. Ratcliffe	2
A Preliminary Index of Country Music Artists and Songs in Commercial Motion Pictures (1928-1953), Part 4, by Willie Smyth	8
<u>Graphics #65:</u> Signifying Banjos, by Archie Green	19
<u>Record Review Essay:</u> Robert Cantwell's <i>Bluegrass Breakdown: The Making of the Old Southern Sound</i> , by Mayne Smith	33
<u>Record Review Essay:</u> Minstrelsy and Tradition: A Review of <i>Minstrels and Tunesmiths</i> (JEMF LP 109), by Robert Cantwell	39
<u>Book Reviews:</u> <i>Closing the Circle: A Cultural History of the Rock Revolution</i> , by Herbert I. London (Barret E. Hansen--"Dr. Demento"); <i>Scalded to Death by the Steam</i> , by Katie Letcher Lyle (Brett Williams); <i>Flying Dragons, Flowing Streams: Music in the Life of San Francisco's Chinese</i> , by Ronald Riddle (Philip Sonnichsen); <i>The Day the World Turned Blue: A Biography of Gene Vincent</i> , by Britt Hagarty (B. Lee Cooper); <i>Blues Lyric Poetry: A Concordance and Blues Lyric Poetry: An Anthology</i> , by Michael Taft (Norm Cohen); <i>Folk Visions and Voices: Traditional Music and Song in North Georgia</i> , by Art Rosenbaum (Norm Cohen)	42
JEMF Publications	51

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The *JEMF Quarterly* is edited by Linda L. Painter. Manuscripts that fall within the area of the journal's goals (described on the inside front cover) are invited but should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped return envelope. Address all manuscripts, books, and records for review, and other communications, to: Editor, JEMFQ, John Edwards Memorial Forum, at the Folklore and Mythology Center, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024.



THE AMERICAN COWBOY:  
A NOTE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MUSICAL IMAGE

by  
Sam D. Ratcliffe

A chorus of voices has arisen in recent years pointing to the "fact" of the demise of the American cowboy. Most of these observers ascribe his passing to the consolidation of ranches, mechanization of labor, and urbanization. Obviously, they are correct in one sense: the "long drive," ranches without some form of mechanization, and cowhands who have not worked (or played) in a large city are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find. But change does not kill off the "authentic" cowboy, it merely renders the task of finding him a bit more challenging. He has taken on layers of meaning to become as enigmatic and complex as that body of music that concerns itself with him. This musical evolution parallels the emergence of the cowboy as a multifaceted, readily exploitable figure of American popular culture. Instead of changing roles, he has acquired new ones and, rather than being mutually exclusive, the older roles can be dusted off at any time (and frequently are) in order to make the cowboy serve as the symbol of a nation whose people themselves have taken on a multitude of faces. This study examines four songs that, along with their performers, serve as signposts along the trail of the cowboy across the musical range.<sup>1</sup>

The post-Civil War cattle drives from Texas to shipping points in Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska generated music as well as dollars for Southern cowhands and their cattleman employers. These first cowboy songs constitute a genre of American work songs, arising from the task of handling livestock, just as many of the songs of black Americans stemmed from labor on Southern plantations.<sup>2</sup> The audience usually consisted of other cowboys and the cattle themselves since singing sometimes calmed a restless herd. These workers utilized a wide range of songs including hymns, love ballads, and any appropriate popular songs. However, as occurs often within a folk culture, this one spawned songs concerned specifically with its people and activities, such as

"Good-by, Old Paint."

"Good-by, Old Paint" proves to be a useful starting point for a study of the development of the musical image of the cowboy in that it depicts the life of the working cowboy, conveying a sense of the authenticity of his culture as well as themes that will recur in later music dealing with cowboy life. Songs of this ilk served to lay the earliest foundations of cowboy imagery in music. As is the case of most folk songs, "Good-by, Old Paint" has several different versions and no certain authorship. The accompanying lyrics are transcribed from John Lomax's 1942 recording of former cowboy Sloan Matthews in Pecos, Texas. Recorded on relatively primitive equipment, this a cappella rendition captures fundamental elements of this folk genre: a rough-voiced cowhand singing without accompaniment, quite possibly while on "night herd." Though rather dull and unpleasant by today's standards, "Good-by, Old Paint" has value precisely because these same characteristics often marked the life of a trail hand.<sup>3</sup>

GOODBYE OLD PAINT

My foot's in the stirrup, my pony  
won't stand;  
Goodbye, Old Paint, I'm a-leavin'  
Cheyenne.

I'm a-leavin' Cheyenne, I'm off  
for Montan';  
Goodbye, Old Paint, I'm a-leavin'  
Cheyenne.

I'm a ridin' Old Paint, I'm a-leadin'  
Old  
Goodbye, Old Paint, I'm a-leavin'  
Cheyenne.

With my feet in the stirrups, my  
bridle in my hand,  
Goodbye, Old Paint, I'm a-leavin'  
Cheyenne

Old Paint's a good pony, he paces  
when he can;  
Goodbye, Little Annie, I'm off for  
Cheyenne.

Oh, hitch up your horses and feed  
them some hay,  
And set yourself by me as long as  
you'll stay.

My horses ain't hungry, they can't  
eat your hay,  
My wagon is loaded and rolling  
away.

I'm a-ridin' Old Paint, I'm a-leadin'  
Old Dan;  
I'm a-goin' to Montana, for to throw  
a hoolihan.

(Jess Morris, Dalhart Texas, recorded by  
John Lomax, 1947. Released on *Cowboy Songs,  
Ballads, and Cattle Calls from Texas* [AAFSL 28]  
Library of Congress Series, "Folk Music of  
the United States.")

The cowboy narrator of "Good-by, Old Paint"  
lives as a rootless, transient laborer whose  
only constant companions are his saddle horse  
Old Paint, and pack horse (or, possibly, mule)  
Old Dan. He is leaving a bleak settlement,  
Cheyenne, for a desolate wilderness, Montana,  
thus giving one of the first musical hints of  
the theme of the cowboy's alienation from urban  
American society and its attendant "Eastern"  
values. Also, this anonymous cowboy bids fare-  
well to "little Annie," evidently a young lady  
with whom he desires no further entanglement.  
By impatiently refusing to stop even for hay,  
Old Paint furnishes his rider with an excuse  
for an immediate departure. This opening line  
of the sixth verse is tossed off almost dis-  
dainfully, as if neither the horses nor their  
owner need any sustenance. The cowboy estab-  
lishes himself early on in his music as a loner  
who depends on no man, needs no woman, and finds  
his closest companionship with animals.<sup>4</sup>

The folk origins and oral transmission of  
"Good-by, Old Paint" preclude an ironclad anal-  
ysis of the precise motivations behind the com-  
position of the song. In fact, Matthews's ver-  
sion contains elements of a similar cowboy song,  
"I Ride an Old Paint," notably, the concluding  
verse. However, this study is concerning it-  
self with overall images projected by this song,  
rather than with resolving hazy questions of  
authorship and origin. A verse not included  
in Matthews's version chronicles the death  
of the cowboy's father from excessive drinking  
and the narrator's deterministic resignation  
to a similar fate for himself. Another verse,  
appearing usually at the song's conclusion,  
relates the cowboy's instructions for the con-  
duct of his "funeral." All in all, a thoroughly  
gloomy song reflecting themes that echo through  
the subsequent century of music by and about  
the American cowboy: the centrality of work in  
his life, an aversion to intense romantic in-

volvement, alienation from society, and an under-  
current of death running through the cowboy's  
concerns, activities, and aspirations in life.<sup>5</sup>

Foy Willing's "Ghost Riders in the Sky"  
series to deepen the darkness of the vision of  
Western life offered up by "Goodby, Old Paint."  
Composed by professional songwriter Stan Jones  
in 1949, it nevertheless retains some of the  
flavor of cowboy folk songs and represents some-  
thing of a transition between these two genres.<sup>6</sup>

#### GHOST RIDERS IN THE SKY

An old cowpoke went ridin' out one dark  
and windy day,  
Upon a ridge he rested as he went along  
his way.  
When all at once a mighty herd of red-  
eyed cows he saw,  
Plowin' through the ragged skies and  
up a cloudy draw.

#### Refrain:

Yippee yi aye, yippee yi oh,  
The ghost riders in the sky.  
  
Their brands were still on fire and their  
hooves were made of steel,  
Their horns were black and shiny and their  
hot breath he could feel.  
A bolt of fear went through him as they  
thundered through the sky,  
For he saw the riders comin' hard and he  
heard their mournful cry.  
  
Their faces gaunt, their eyes were blurred,  
their shirts all soaked with sweat,  
They're ridin' hard to catch that herd  
but they ain't caught 'em yet.  
For they got to ride forever on that range  
up in the sky,  
On horses snortin' fire, as they ride on,  
hear their cry.

(Foy Willing, released on Capitol Records. Copy-  
right 1949, Edwin H. Morris & Co., a division of  
MPL Communication, Inc. Renewed 1977.)

It resembles "Good-by, Old Paint" in its  
presentation of solitude and death as realities  
which the cowboy must be prepared to face, though  
presenting these ideas more overtly than does  
the earlier song. The cowboy of "Ghost Riders  
in the Sky" is a lonely figure exhorted to decide  
his eternal destiny by "spiritual" cowboys remin-  
iscent of the Scriptural apocalyptic horsemen of  
Revelation 6. Unlike the happy primitive of  
more upbeat cowboy songs, such as "Whoopee-Ti-Yi-  
Yo," these riders portray endless cowboying as a  
form of eternal judgment rather than as a romp  
through a prairie springtime. The hostile top-  
ography of the West takes on a spiritual harsh-  
ness--"ragged sky," "cloudy draw"--as it relent-  
lessly batters the begrimed, sweating horsemen  
who gallop along a bleak and lonely ridge. This  
pessimistic presentation of cowboy life and work  
links "Ghost Riders in the Sky" to realistic  
cowboy folk songs, yet its melodramatic, care-

fully refined morbidity indicates the song's popular culture origin.

Willing and his studio musicians utilize numerous techniques in the arsenal of popular music in order to fine-tune this morbid focus. Born in Texas as Foy Willingham in 1915, he had broken into popular music in 1933 as a vocalist on a New York City radio program sponsored by Crazy Water Crystals. After moving to California in 1940, he joined Al Sloey and Jimmy Dean to form the Riders of the Purple Sage singing group. This trio both toured with Roy Rogers and appeared in several films with him in the 1940s, thereby exposing Willing to the recording techniques of those performers dubbed "Singing Cowboys," which he readily adopted.<sup>7</sup> The dramatic, constant guitar strumming represents the only instrumentation in "Ghost Riders in the Sky" that would have been found in the bunkhouse or around the campfire of a cattle camp at the turn of the century. This guitar work undergirds the song's sense of, foreboding, which is intensified by the swelling chorus opening the song and repeated throughout. These well-trained male voices aid greatly in creating an atmosphere akin to that of a Wagnerian morality play. However, the "yippee-yi-yo, yippee-yi-yay" whoops and the tension-filled, frenetic fiddling attempt to confer the pedigree of a traditional cowboy folk song on "Ghost Riders in the Sky." But the addition of trumpets, French horns, and organs cuts this effort off at the musical pass; when placed in an orchestra, fiddles quickly become violins. The closing, reverberating organ chord of Willing's rendition hauntingly, though unconsciously, anticipates sounds of the rock music of two decades later. Strikingly similar musical techniques appear in the music of the Doors, whose leader, the late Jim Morrison, dwelt extensively on the subjects of death and mysticism in both his music and personal life.<sup>8</sup>

Another composition of the 1940s, "Miss Molly" centers on one of themes of "Good-by, Old Paint," that of the cowboy's relationship with women. Penned in 1942 by Texas songwriter Cindy Walker, it exemplifies the music of some of country music's most innovative performers, Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The Playboys performed the song in the 1943 Columbia Pictures release *Silver City Raiders*, one of fifteen films in which they starred.<sup>9</sup> This group reflected the cultural diversity of its native state, Texas, by fusing country, jazz, blues, and mariachi music into that eclectic blend known variously as western swing, Texas swing, or western jazz, among other titles. Wills's childhood among the blacks and rural whites of Limestone County and, later, the West Texas community of Turkey brought the twin influences of country and blues to bear on his musical tastes. Also, some of the Playboys, known originally as Wills's Fiddle Band, had begun their musical careers with Milton Brown and his Musical Brownies, a group that incorporated an abundance of Louisiana jazz into its repertoire.

Despite drawing heavily on folk sources, the Playboys worked within the realm of popular culture, aided greatly in their recording career by Arthur Satherly, an A&R man for different record companies. Unconcerned with folk/popular culture distinctions, they focused on producing music that was innovative, danceable, and, above all, entertaining.<sup>10</sup>

#### MISS MOLLY

Now, have you seen Miss Molly?  
Her cheeks are rosy red,  
Her lips are soft as satin  
And they taste like gingerbread.

#### Refrain:

Oh-oh-oh, me oh my, Miss Molly  
I'm in love with you;  
Oh me oh my, Miss Molly,  
Won't you say you love me too.

Now when Miss Molly's smiling,  
The sun is dim a spell;  
When she laughs her voice is  
Like a little silver bell.

Listen, dear Miss Molly,  
I've told you this before,  
Even though I've told you so,  
I'll tell you just once more.

I'll trade my horse and saddle,  
Cow drivin' I'll resign,  
If only, Miss Molly,  
You will say that you'll be mine.

(copyright, Mesa Music, BMI)

"Miss Molly" typifies Bob Wills's brand of western swing, notably in its instrumentation. Wills's fiddle becomes the centerpiece of the song, demonstrating the assertion of one country music historian that such fiddle stylings proved to be Wills's greatest contribution to country music.<sup>11</sup> Acoustic and steel guitars serve to accentuate the song's "country" sound. However, the Playboys also utilized electric guitar, piano, drums, and horns, much to the dismay of country music purists of the 1930s and forties. This conglomeration of instruments sometimes constituted a full jazz band, leading some of the country music traditionalists to question whether this band even played country music. By responding positively to the influence of his Big Band counterparts such as Benny Goodman, Wills undermined his credentials with these purists while ensuring his permanent status as an innovative genius in the history of country music.<sup>12</sup>

Wills's band donned Western attire and played up its Texas origins yet performed relatively few songs concerning the actual life and work of the cowboy. The bulk of the Playboys's repertoire focused on the theme of romantic love rather than on folk songs of the cowboy, such as "Good-by, Old Paint." Not coincidentally "Miss Molly" is the least overtly cowboy song examined in this study. The listener does not know that



the narrator has any connection whatsoever with the cattle business until the concluding verse of the song. Up until that point, he has been relating the tale of just another suitor attempting to convince "Miss Molly" to return his unrequited love. However, the revelation of the narrator's occupation sets up the age-old tension between a footloose man continuing to follow his nomadic lifestyle or settling down with that rare find, a "good woman." Of course, this implies that the woman has presented the cowboy with this "all-or-nothing" choice though the song's lyrics never spell this out explicitly. At any rate, the cowboy of "Miss Molly" dismounts and offers to surrender his horse and saddle, which define him both as a worker and as a powerful masculine figure. Certainly, this song may be regarded simply as the lighthearted tale of a lovesick cowboy, which it seems to be upon first hearing; however, "Miss Molly" speaks to a cultural tension between male machismo and the "civilizing" influence of women, that the "masculine" West can survive only so long as its rugged male citizenry steers clear of feminine wiles.

Almost four decades after this musical hint at the cowboy's status as an endangered species, the Marshall Tucker Band bid a rousing farewell to him in "The Last of the Singing Cowboys."<sup>13</sup> This group also sings of Western life in a musical style touched by both jazz and country music. However, Bob Wills mixed the two more thoroughly and innovatively while Marshall Tucker has merely added touches of country music, such as occasional use of steel guitar, to its predominantly blues-jazz-rock repertoire. Natives of South Carolina, the latter group's members cut their musical teeth on rhythm and blues learned from black musicians in the rural South. These influences, along with a healthy dose of jazz, permeate the music of a group that, along with the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd, set the pace in the early-mid 1970s for that sound known as Southern rock.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE LAST OF THE SINGING COWBOYS

In the corner of a dark barroom  
Sat an old cowboy, singing western tunes,  
Singing songs that he learned as a child,  
All about the West, back when it was wild.

He said he came from down Texas way,  
The cowboys were tough, the women the same way.  
Said he was a star back in '31;  
Hollywood liked him for some songs that he  
had done.

He's the last of the singing cowboys  
Singing songs of desperation and joy  
Yippee I Oh--Yippee I Ay  
Yippee I Ay.

He took a break just to chug him down some  
beer,

"Come on folks, holler out the songs you'd  
like to hear,

If I know one, I know a million or two,  
I'm not up here playing for me, this is  
all done for you."

And then he bragged of the Stetson hat  
that he wore,  
Said it was the finest made since the war.  
"And I won this silver buckle ridin'  
on a cow"

As he laughed he said, "I bet you're  
wonderin' how."

"'Cause I'm the last of the singing  
cowboys,  
Singing songs of desperation and joy,  
Yippee I Oh--Yippee I Ay  
Yippee I Ay."

And after three hours or maybe more,  
A lady grabbed his arm and showed him  
to the door.

The bartender said, "He's blind, you see,  
Don't tell him the only audience he had  
was you and me."

'Cause he's the last of the singing cowboys,  
Singing songs of desperation and joy,  
Yippee I Oh--Yippee I Ay  
Yippee I Ay.

(Copyright 1979, Marshall Tucker Publishing Co./  
No Exit Music Co., Inc., BMI)

"The Last of the Singing Cowboys" illustrates vividly how the Marshall Tucker Band projects Western imagery in a jazz-rock musical context. Sticking to its accustomed musical style, it does not attempt to branch out into country music and relies on the lyrics to qualify the music as Western or cowboy. A full jazz band, bereft of any instruments associated with the origins of music by and about the cowboy, e.g., acoustic guitar or fiddle, emphasizes horns, heavy percussion, and electric guitar. Chuck Leavell, founder of the "jazz-fusion" band Sea Level, plays keyboards. Another note on Marshall Tucker's "cosmetic cowboyess": In concert, only two of the band's members wear Western garb, while the others affect the standard dress of rock musicians, i.e., whatever they wish.

"The Last of the Singing Cowboys" comments on American social change as much as on the plight of its central figure. Its protagonist began his career as a laborer on horseback who happened to have mastered a folk music genre that would prove to have mass appeal, thus making him a legitimate Singing Cowboy. Drawn like a moth to a flame, he capitalizes on this knowledge and his own talent through the media of film and records during the heyday of "real" cowboy heroes such as Tom Mix and Gene Autry. However, blindness and fickle popular taste have reduced him to unknowingly parodying his former success for audiences of two or three listeners. "The Last of the Singing Cowboys" follows the cowboy's odyssey from common laborer to his deceptive zenith of popularity on vinyl and the silver screen and, after this stardom wanes, to his place as a figure of American

pathos and nostalgia. The "yippee-I-oh, yip-pee-I-ay" of the echoes faintly both the care-free life of the cowboy as well as the songs that sprang from the folk culture associated with that life. Finally, the musical repertoire of this "last of his race" vocalizes both joy for his memories and the desperation of an elderly blind man from a rural background entrapped by the complexities and hardships of an increasingly urbanized society in which he feels himself to be out of place.

While the Marshall Tucker Band does not purport to defend writers such as Jane Kramer and Larry McMurty, this musical farewell to the Singing Cowboy does reflect perceptions similar to those held by these writers. Granted, the Marshall Tucker Band is not functioning primarily as a voice of serious social criticism; rather, the group is attempting to sell records and perform

songs aesthetically pleasing to its members. Nevertheless, the song, though concerned with the "singing" cowboy, serves as an apt illustration of the viewpoints of the cowboy's literary and sociological undertakers who address his plight in a more general fashion. But even the Singing Cowboy is still not an extinct species. For example, George Strait, a thirty-one-year-old ranch foreman from Pearsall, Texas, has covered successfully the Bob Wills hit "Right or Wrong." (15) The working cowboy still performs tasks indispensable to the business of cattle raising, though he has supplemented his horse with the pickup truck, electric branding iron, and, occasionally, the helicopter as tools of his trade. The cowboy, "singing" or otherwise, seems to be a resilient creature in actual life as well as popular culture and his burial, be it on the lone prairie or elsewhere, premature.

--University of Texas  
Austin, Texas

#### NOTES

1. Some of the better writings concerning the cowboy's passing are Larry McMurty, "The God Abandons Texas" and "Take My Saddle From the Wall: A Valediction," in *In a Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968) and Jane Kramer, *The Last Cowboy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). Archie Green furnishes an informative discussion of the evolution of the cowboy's role in American culture in "Austin's Cowmic Cowboys: Words in Collision," in *And Other Neighborly Names: Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore*, eds. Richard Bauman and Roger G. Abrahams (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), esp. pp. 152-160.
2. John Lomax discusses cowboy songs in the same context as Negro folk songs in his autobiography, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), esp. Ch. 3, "Hunting Cowboy Songs." His *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (New York: Macmillan, 1910) was the first collection of indigenous American folk songs to be accompanied by published music. For a comparison of these folk songs with those of the Argentine cattle culture, see Stephen J. Paullada, *Rawhide and Song* (New York: Vantage Press, 1963).

The quantity of writings on the late nineteenth-century cattle industry is beginning to approach the number of longhorn cattle driven north to market. Nevertheless, Joseph G. McCoy's *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* (Kansas City, MO: Ramsey, Millet, and Hudson, 1874), a first-hand account by the "founder" of the cattle towns, still serves as a useful starting point for a study of the early days of the cattle industry in the Central Plains. See also Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1931), pp. 205-269 and Maurice Frink, W. Turrentine Jackson, and Agnes Wright Spring, *When Grass Was King: Contributions to the Western Range Cattle Industry Study* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1956), p. 41. Robert R. Dykstra depicts the relationship between the Texas cattlemen and their Kansas hosts to be harmonious in *The Cattle Towns* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968). William W. Savage, Jr. disagrees with this view in "Newspapers and Local History: A Critique of Robert R. Dykstra's *The Cattle Towns*" in *Journal of the West* X (July 1971): 572-577. For other studies of the origins of cattle raising in the trans-Mississippi West, see Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), Ernest S. Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929); Louis Pelzer, *The Cattleman's Frontier* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1936); and, most recently, Terry G. Jordan's somewhat controversial *Trails to Texas: Southern Roots of Western Cattle Ranching* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981). Gene M. Gressley focuses on the cattleman's relation to the national economy in *Bankers and Cattlemen* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966). Lewish Atherton ably distinguishes between cattlemen and cowboys and provides an informative study of the former group in *The Cattle Kings* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1961).



3. Lomax's recording of Matthews was released on the LP *Cowboy Songs, Ballads, and Cattle Calls from Texas* (AAFSL28, ca. 1948), Archives of American Folk Song, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. This version, with the exception of the concluding verse, is the same as that found in Lomax's *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 329-330. Lomax's recording of former XIT cowboy Jess Morris's rendition of "Good-by, Old Paint" is also on this Library of Congress LP.
4. Ben Merchant Vorpahl examines how a prominent artist of the American West, Frederic Remington, dealt with the theme of alienation and cultural tension between the eastern and western United States in *Frederic Remington and the West: With the Eye of the Mind* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), esp. Part II, "Exodus."
5. Jim Bob Tinsley discusses the texts and histories of both "Good-by, Old Paint" and "I Ride an Old Paint" in *He Was Singin' This Song* (Orlando: University Presses of Florida, 1981), pp. 122-129. However, Tinsley seems to indicate that lyrics for the former song, which appear on p. 122, correspond to those of Jess Morris's version on *Cowboy Songs, Ballads, and Cattle Calls from Texas*, which is simply not the case. See also Margaret Larkin, *Singing Cowboy* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1963), pp. 169-170.
6. Originally released by Capitol Records, Reissue: Bruno-Dean RBS-119.
7. Fred Dellar, Roy Thompson, and Doug Green, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Country Music* (New York: Harmony Books, 1977), p. 248.  
Douglas B. Green provides a useful, brief history of the singing cowboy phenomenon in "The Singing Cowboy: An American Dream," *The Journal of Country Music* 7 (May 1978): 5-58. See also John White, *Git Along, Little Dogies* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), p. 141.
8. *The Doors* (Elektra 74007) is representative of this group's distinctive style.
9. "Miss Molly" was released as a single on Okeh 6710 and on the Columbia LP HL9003. It is most accessible on United Artists LP LA 216-J2, *For the Last Time*. Charles Townsend discusses the song's origin in *San Antonio Rose: The Life and Music of Bob Wills* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), pp. 210-211, 374.
10. Townsend, *San Antonio Rose*, pp. 99, 112-118, and Bill C. Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.: A Fifty-Year History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 175. However, Brown formed the Brownies after leaving the Wills Fiddle Band. See Townsend, pp. 48-49, 73-74.
11. Malone, pp. 179, 181.
12. Townsend, pp. 101-102.
13. Released on Warner Brothers LP BSK-3317, *Running Like the Wind*.
14. See interview with the Marshall Tucker Band in *Rolling Stone*, no. 244 (28 July 1977), p. 20. For an overview of the fusion of rock and country music, see Ray Stephen Tucker, "The Western Image in Country Music" (M.A. thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1976).
15. Released on MCA 5450, *Right or Wrong*. Glenn Ohrlin, song collector, performer, Arkansas rancher, and former rodeo cowboy, is a contemporary variation of the "singing cowboy." He concentrates on those songs composed and sung by working cowboys, many of them personal acquaintances of Ohrlin's. See his *The Hell-Bound Train: A Cowboy Songbook* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973) for the lyrics, sheet music, and history of one hundred of these songs.

A PRELIMINARY INDEX OF COUNTRY MUSIC ARTISTS AND SONGS  
IN COMMERCIAL MOTION PICTURES (1928-1953), PART 4

by

Willie Smyth

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Red River Valley   | Give Me My Saddle  |
| Springtime on the Range Today  | I'll Remember April  |
| Sunset on the Trail  | Rockin' & Reelin'  |
| When Pay Day Rolls Along   | A Tisket, a Tasket   |
| Red Rock Outlaw (P/T, 1947); Johnnie Arizona                                     | Ride 'Em Cowgirl (GN, 1939); Dorothy Page,<br>Milton Frome   |
| Redwood Forest Trail (REP, 1950); Rex Allen                                      | Ride, Ranger, Ride (REP, 1937); Gene Autry,<br>Tennessee Ramblers  |
| On Top of Old Smokey   |  |
| Sourwood Mountain  |  |
| Redskins and Redheads (RKO, 1941); Ray Whitley                                   | Ride, Tenderfoot, Ride (REP, 1940); Gene Autry,<br>Pacemakers  |
| Renegade Rangers (RKO, 1938); Ray Whitley  | Eleven More Months and Ten More Days   |
| Renegade Trail (PMT, 1939); The King's Men, Bill<br>Boyd                         | Leaning on the Old Top Rail  |
| Hi Thar Stranger   | Ride, Tenderfoot, Ride   |
| Lazy Rolls the Rio Grande  | That was Me by the Sea   |
|  | Woodpecker Song  |
| Renegades of the Rio Grande (UNIV, 1945); Ray<br>Whitley & His Bar 6 Cowboys     | Riders in the Sky (COL, 1949); Gene Autry  |
| Return of the Durango Kid (COL, 1945); Tex<br>Harding, The Jesters               | Cowboy's Lament  |
|  | It Makes No Difference Now   |
|  | Riders in the Sky  |
| Return of the Rangers (PRC, 1943); Jim Newill                                    | Riders of Black River (COL, 1939); Charles<br>Starrett, Sons of the Pioneers   |
| Headin' Westward   |  |
| Home on the Range  | Riders of Death Valley (unk.); Bob Baker   |
| Paradise Trail   | Ride Along   |
| Rhythm of the Rio Grande (MON, 1940); Tex Ritter                                 | Riders of the Badlands (COL, 1941); Cliff<br>Edwards   |
| Mexicali Moon  |  |
| The Mexican Bandit   | Riders of the Dawn (MON, 1937); Jack Randall   |
| Rhythm of the Rio Grande   |  |
| Rhythm of the Saddle (REP, 1938); Gene Autry                                     | Riders of the Dawn (MON, 1945); Jimmy Wakely,<br>Bob Whelton, Dad Pickard, Fiddlin' Arthur<br>Smith, Wesley Tuttle & His Texas Stars |
| Merry Go Roundup   |  |
| Oh Ladies  | Riders of the Frontier (MON, 1939); Tex Ritter   |
| The Old Trail  | The Boll Weevil  |
|  | Ridin' down to Texas   |
| Rhythm on the Range (PMT, 1936); Sons of the<br>Pioneers, Bing Crosby            | Rose of My Dreams  |
| Empty Saddles  | 10,000 Cattle  |
| The House that Jack Built for Jill   |  |
| I Can't Escape from You  | Riders of the Northland (COL, 1942); Cliff<br>Edwards  |
| If You Can't Sing, You'll Have to Swing It                                       | Silver Age in the Twilight   |
| I'm an Old Cowhand   | We'll Carry the Torch for Miss Liberty   |
| Rhythm Roundup (COL, 1945); Bob Wills & His<br>Texas Playboys, Hoosier Hot Shots | Riders of the Northwest Mounted (COL, 1943); Bob<br>Wills and the Texas Playboys   |
| Rhythm Wranglers (RKO Short, 1937); Ray Whitley                                  | Bluebonnet Lane  |
| Riches of the Rockies (GN, 1937); Tex Ritter                                     | The Last Goodbye   |
|  | Song of the Rippling Stream  |
| Ride Clear of Diablo (UI, 1954); Abbie Lane                                      | When You're a Mountie  |
| Nodre de Ronda   |  |
| Wanted   | Riders of the Pasco Basin (UNIV, 1940); Bob<br>Baker   |
| Ride 'Em Cowboy (UNIV, 1942); Ella Fitzgerald,<br>Hi Hatters, Dick Foran         | I'm Tying up My Bridle   |
|  | Song of the Prairie  |
| Cowboogie  |  |

Riders of the Rockies (GN, 1937); Tex Ritter

Arizona Rangers  
Home on the Range  
Riders of the Rockies  
Song of the Open Range

Riders of the Santa Fe (UNIV, 1946); Ray Whitley  
& His Bar 6 Cowboys

Riders of the Timberline (PMT, 1941); unidentified group

The Fighting Forty

Riders of the Whistling Pines (COL, 1949); Gene Autry, Cass County Boys (Jerry Scoggins, Fred Martin, Bert Dodson), The Pinafores

Every Time  
Hair of Gold  
I Feel the Spirit  
It's My Lazy Day  
Let's Go Roaming Around the Range  
Little Big Dry  
Toolie, Oolie, Doolie

Ridin' a Rainbow (REP, 1941); Gene Autry, Smiley Burnette

Be Honest With Me  
Carry Me Back to the Lone Prairie  
Hunky Dunky Dorey  
I'm the Only Lonely One  
Ridin' a Rainbow  
Sing a Song of Laughter  
Some Dancin'  
Steamboat Bill  
What's Your Favorite Holiday

Ridin' Down the Canyon (REP, 1942); Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

Blue Prairie  
Curly Joe  
In a Little Spanish Town  
My Little Buckaroo  
Sagebrush Symphony  
Who Am I?

Ridin' Down the Trail (MON, 1947); Jimmy Wakely, Jesse Ashlock

Cowtown, U.S.A.  
I've Gotta See Texas  
Ridin' Down the Trail With You

Ridin' Home to Texas (MON, 1941); Tex Ritter, Cal Shrum & His Rhythm Rangers, Eddie Dean

Ridin' the Cherokee Trail (MON, 1941); Tex Ritter, Tennessee Ramblers

Down in Arkansas  
Dynamite Dan  
I'm a Wild Galoot from Tuzigoot  
Old Pete the Bandito  
Pete the Toreador  
Song of the Coyote  
Tennessee, Tennessee

Ridin' the Outlaw Trail (COL, 1951); Pee Wee King & His Golden West Cowboys, Smiley Burnette

Ridin' the Range (REP, n/d); Smiley Burnette

Riding the Wind (RKO, 1941); Ray Whitley

Riding Through Nevada (COL, 1942); Jimmie Davis & His Rainbow Ramblers

Pay Me No Mind  
You are My Sunshine

Riding West (unk.); Ernest Tubb

Rim of the Canyon (COL, 1949); Gene Autry

Rim of the Canyon  
You're the Only Star in My Blue Heaven

Rio Grande (COL, 1938); Sons of the Pioneers

Old Bronco Pal  
Rocky Roads  
Slumbertime on the Range  
Tumblin' Tumbleweeds  
The West is in My Soul

Rio Grande (REP, 1950); Sons of the Pioneers

Cattle Call  
Down by the Glenside  
Footsore Cavalry  
I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen  
My Gal is Purple  
San Antone  
Yellow Stripes

Rio Grande Patrol (RKO, 1950)

Camptown Races  
You May Not Remember

River of No Return (20th, 1954); Marilyn Monroe, Tennessee Ernie Ford

Down in the Meadow  
I'm Gonna File My Claim  
One Silver Dollar  
River of No Return

Road Agent (UNIV, 1941); Dick Foran

Cielito Lindo  
Ridin' Home

Roaring Frontiers (COL, 1941); Tex Ritter

Judge Morrow Will Find the Truth and  
Set me Free  
Then You're a Part of the West  
You've Got to Come and Get Me Boys

Roaring Rangers (COL, 1946); Merle Travis & His Bronco Busters

Roaring Six Guns (AMB, 1937); Ken Maynard

Robbers of the Range (RKO, 1941); Ray Whitley



Singing Sheriff (UNIV, 1944); Spade Cooley Orchestra, Fuzzy Knight

Singing Spurs (COL, 1948); Hoosier Hot Shots, Shamrock Cowboys

Singing Vagabond (REP, 1936); Gene Autry, Smiley Burnette

All Nice People  
Friends of the Prairie, Farewell  
Wagon Train

Sioux City Sue (REP, 1946); Gene Autry, Cass County Boys

Chisholm Trail  
Oklahoma Hills  
Ridin' Double  
Sioux City Sue  
Someday You'll Want Me to Want You  
You Stole My Heart  
Yours

Six Gun Gold (RKO, 1941); Ray Whitley

Six Gun Music (UI Short, 1949); Tex Williams & His Band

Six Gun Rhythm (GN, 1939); Tex Fletcher

Rock Me in the Cradle in the Rockies

Six Gun Serenade (MON, 1947); Jimmy Wakely, Rivers Lewis, Stanley Ellison, Fiddlin' Arthur Smith

Blue, Blue Eyes  
Headin' up the Santa Fe Trail  
You are Always on My Mind

Slightly Static (MGM, 1935); Sons of the Pioneers

Echoes from the Hills

Smoky (20th, n/d); Burl Ives

Blue Tail Fly  
Foggy, Foggy Dew  
Wobbly Boogie Bee

Smoky Mountain Melody (REP, 1948); Roy Acuff & Smoky Mountain Boys, Jimmy Riddle, Carolina Cotton, Tommy Mangers

Billy Boy  
Smoky Mountain Moon  
Tennessee Central #9  
Thank God  
You Can De, You Can Da

Smoky River Serenade (COL, 1947); Hoosier Hot Shots, Ruth Terry

Son of Paleface (PMT, 1952); Roy Rogers, Jane Russell

Buttons and Bows  
California Rose  
Fourlegged Friend

There's a Cloud in My Valley of Sunshine  
What a Dirty Shame  
Wing-Ding Tonight

Son of Roaring Dan (UNIV, 1940); Bob Baker

And Then I Got Married  
Sing Yippi Ki Yi

Son of the Range (MON, 1944); Jimmy Wakely

Song of Arizona (REP, 1946); Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Sons of the Pioneers

Did You Ever Get the Feeling in  
the Moonlight  
Half-A-Chance Ranch  
Michael O'Leary, O'Bryan, O'Toole  
Mr. Spook Steps Out  
Round and Round - The Lariat Song  
Song of Arizona  
Will Ya Be My Darling

Song of Idaho (COL, 1948); Hoosier Hot Shots, Kirby Grant, Starlighters, Sunshine Boys, Sunshine Girls

Driftin'  
Idaho  
Nobody Else But You

Song of Nevada (REP, 1944); Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

A Cowboy has to Yodel in the Morning  
The Harum Scarum Baron of the Harmonium  
Hi Ho Little Dogies  
It's Love, Love, Love  
New Moon Over Nevada  
What are We Going To Do?

Song of Old Wyoming (PRC, 1945); Eddie Dean

In the Hills of Old Wyoming

Song of Texas (REP, 1943); Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

Mexicali Rose  
Moonlight and Roses  
On the Rhythm Range  
Rainbow Over the Bridge

Song of the Buckaroo (MON, 1939); Tex Ritter

I Promise You  
Little Tenderfoot  
Texas Dan

Song of the Drifter (MON, 1948); Jimmy Wakely, Cliffie Stone, Fiddlin' Arthur Smith

Song of the Gringo (GN, 1936); Tex Ritter

My Sweet Chiquita  
Out on the Lone Prairie  
Rye Whiskey  
Sam Hall  
Yesterdays are Happy Days  
You are Reality

Song of the Prairie (COL, 1945); Hoosier Hot Shots, June Storey, Deuce Spriggins, Town Criers, Trailsmen, Carolina Cotton

Sing To Me, Cowboy

Song of the Range (MON, 1944); Jimmy Wakely, Johnny Bond & His Red River Valley Boys, The Sunshine Girls

Song of the Saddle (WB, 1936); Dick Foran

Song of the Sierras (MON, 1946); Jimmy Wakely, Lasses White, Wesley Tuttle & His Texas Stars, Jesse Ashlock

Song of the Wasteland (MON, 1947); Jimmy Wakely, The Saddle Pals, Jesse Ashlock

Sons of New Mexico (COL, 1950); Gene Autry, Frankie Marvin

Can't Shake the Sand of Texas  
Honey I'm in Love With You  
NMMI March  
There's a Rainbow on the Rio Colorado

Sons of the Pioneers (REP, 1942); Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

Come and Get It  
He's Gone up the Trail  
Lily of Hillbilly Valley  
Things are Never What They Seem  
Trail Herdin' Cowboy  
The West is in My Soul

Soundies Pictures made between 1941-46 containing country-oriented songs are listed by performer, followed by the number made and songs recorded (if known)

Austin, Gene (6): Rootin' Tootin' Shootin' Man from Texas

Beeler, Margie: Texas Strip

Burton, Mary: Ragtime Cowboy Joe  
Cactus Cowboys (7)

Cooley, Spade (8): Corinne Corinne, My Chick-asaw Gal, Shame on You, Take Me Back to Tulsa, There's No Sunshine

Davis, Rufe: Old Sow Song

Darling, Denver: Buffalo Gals, Mama Don't Want No Music Playin', Shy Anne from Cheyenne

Dude Ranchers (1)

Edwards, Cliff (1)

Emerson, Tom's Hillbillies (15): Go Along Mule, Hillbilly Hoosgow

Gracey, Stewart (1)

Gregory, Bobby (3)

Harper, Redd: There's a Hole in the Old Oaken Bucket

Hoosier Hot Shots (3)

King's Men (3)

Korn Kobblers: I Want My Rib, Listen to the Mockingbird, Where the Sweet Mamas Grow

Lewis, Texas Jim (4): Detour

Martins: Skip to My Lou

Marshalls: Clementine

Mondi, Vince (Blue): Wreck of the Old '97

Mountain Kids (1)

Novak, Frank's Rootin' Tooters (8)

Palmer, Chuck & His Rangers: Hillbilly Holiday

Pickards (1)

Plainsmen (4)

Red River Boys: Ti Yi Yippee Aye

Red River Dave (McEnery) (12): Branding Time, Dude Cowboy, Mexicali Rose, Pistol Packin'

Papa, Red River Moon

Robison, Carson & His Buckaroos (4): Boots and Saddles, Carry Me Back to the Low Prairie, Goin' to the Barn Dance Tonight, When It's Springtime in the Rockies

Rogers, Smokey (1)

Rondoliers: Little Nell

Spriggins, Deuce & His Orchestra (8): Roly Poly, Sioux City Sue, Wabash Cannonball

Thomas, Dick: Back in the Saddle Again, Where the Mountain Meets the Sky

Travis, Merle (3): No Vacancy, Texas Home, When the Bloom is on the Sage

Wakely, Jimmy Trio (5): Covered Wagon, Get Along Little Pony, Montana Plains, Night Train, Red River Valley

Walker, Cindy: Bearcat Mountain Girl

Williams, Tex (3)

South of Arizona (COL, 1938); Charles Starrett, Sons of the Pioneers

One More Hand on the Range  
Saddle Your Worries to the Wind  
When the Payday Rolls Around

South of Caliente (REP, 1951); Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Roy Rogers' Riders

Gypsy Trail  
My Home is over Yonder  
Won'tcha Be a Friend of Mine  
Yascha the Gypsy

South of Death Valley (COL, 1949); Smiley Burnette, Tommy Duncan & His Western All Stars

South of Rio (REP, 1949); Monte Hale

Dying Cowboy

South of Santa Fe (COL, 1942); Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

Down the Trail  
Headin' for the Home Corral  
Open Range Ahead  
Song of the Vacquero  
South of Santa Fe  
Trail Dreamin'  
Vacquero Song  
Yodel Your Troubles Away

South of Santa Fe (UI Short, 1949); Tex Williams & His Western Caravan

South of the Border (REP, 1940); Gene Autry,  
Smiley Burnette, The Checkerboard Band

Come to the Fiesta  
Girl of My Dreams  
Goodbye Little Darlin'  
Horse Opry  
Merry Go-Round  
Moon of Manana  
South of the Border  
When the Cactus Blooms Again

South of the Rio Grande (MON, 1945); Guadalajara  
Trio

South of the Santa Fe Trail (COL, 1947); Hank  
Newman & His Georgia Crackers

South Pacific Trail (REP, 1952); Rex Allen, Re-  
public Rhythm Riders

I'll Sing a Love Song  
The Railroad Corral  
Ride Away Your Troubles

Southward Ho (REP, 1939); Roy Rogers

Spade Cooley & His Orchestra (UI Short, 1949); with  
the Pickard Family

Spade Cooley, King of Western Swing (WB Short,  
1945)

Square Dance Time  
Trouble With Me  
Turkey in the Straw  
Wagoner  
Who Killed the Goose

Spoilers of the Plains (REP, 1951); Foy Willing  
& the Riders of the Purple Sage, Republic  
Rhythm Riders

Spoilers of the Range (COL, 1939); Sons of the  
Pioneers

Saddle the Sun  
Trail Dreamin'  
Trail Herdin' Cowboy

Springtime in Texas (MON, 1945); Jimmy Wakely,  
Johnny Bond, "Lasses" White, Callahan Brothers  
& Their Blue Ridge Mountain Boys

Springtime in the Rockies (REP, 1937); Gene  
Autry, Jimmy's Saddle Pals

Down in the Land of the Zulu  
Give Me My Pony and an Open Prairie  
Hayride Wedding in June  
When It's Springtime in the Rockies

Springtime in the Sierras (REP, 1947); Roy  
Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

At the Gates of the Home Corral  
A Cowboy Has to Sing  
Oh What a Picture  
Pedro from Acapulco  
Seeing Nellie Home

Springtime in the Rockies  
What are We Gonna Do Then?

Square Dance Jubilee (LPT, 1949); Smiley and  
Kitty, Cowboy Copas, Spade Cooley, Tumbleweed  
Tumblers, Hermit the Hermit

I Came Here to Be With you  
Ida Red  
It's Dark Outside  
Shame on You  
Square Dance Jubilee  
Tennessee Wagoner  
You've Got Me Wrapped Around Your Finger

Square Dance Katy (MON, 1950); Jimmie Davis and  
His Sunshine Band

Stage Door Canteen (UA, 1942); Roy Rogers and  
the Sons of the Pioneers

Don't Fence Me In

Stagecoach Buckaroo (UNIV, 1942); Fuzzy Knight

Star Reporter of Hollywood (PMT Short, n/d); Sons  
of the Pioneers

Way out There

Star Spangled Rhythm (unk.); Willie Johnson and  
Golden Gate Quartet

Stardust on the Trail (REP, 1942); Gene Autry,  
Smiley Burnette

Deep in the Heart of Texas  
Goodnight Sweetheart  
Home on the Range  
I'll Never Let You Go  
Roll on Little Dogies  
When the Roses Bloom Again  
Wouldn't You Like to Know  
You are My Sunshine

Starlight Over Texas (MON, 1938); Tex Ritter,  
Northwesterners

A Garden in Granada  
Starlight Over Texas  
Viva Tequila

Stars Over Arizona (MON, 1938); Jack Randall

Stars Over Texas (PRC, 1946); Eddie Dean, Sun-  
shine Boys

Stars Over Texas

Station West (RKO, 1948); Burl Ives, June Greer

Sometime Remind Me to Tell You  
The Sun is Shining Warm

Stick To Your Guns (PMT, 1941); Brad King

Stormy (UNIV, 1935); Tex Ritter

Ridge Runnin' Roan



- Stranger from Ponca City (COL, 1947); Texas Jim  
Lewis & His Lone Star Cowboys
- Stranger from Texas (COL, 1939); Sons of the  
Pioneers  
Rocky Road in the Rockies  
Timber Trail
- The Strawberry Roan (UNIV, 1933); Ken Maynard  
The Strawberry Roan
- Strawberry Roan (COL, 1948); Gene Autry, Redd  
Harper  
Can't Shake the Sands of Texas from My Shoes  
Strawberry Roan  
Texas Sandman  
When the White Rose Blooms in Red River  
Valley
- Sudden Bill Dorn (unk., 1937); Gene Autry  
Don't Jump the Gun
- Sundown on the Prairie (MON, 1938); Tex Ritter,  
Musical Tornadoes  
Cactus Pete  
Dust on My Saddle  
Sundown on the Prairie
- Sundown Valley (COL, 1944); Jimmy Wakely and  
His Saddle Pals, Tennessee Ramblers  
Happy Day
- Sunset in El Dorado (REP, 1945); Roy Rogers, Sons  
of the Pioneers  
Belle of El Dorado  
Call of the Prairie  
Go West Young Man  
Kansas Kate  
The Lady Wouldn't Say Yes  
Tain't No Use
- Sunset in the West (REP, 1950); Roy Rogers, Es-  
telita Rodriguez, Foy Willing & the Riders of  
the Purple Sage  
Rollin' Wheels  
Sunset in the West  
When a Pretty Girl Passes By
- Sunset in Wyoming (REP, 1941); Gene Autry, Smiley  
Burnette  
Casey Jones  
Happy Cowboy  
Heebie Jeebie Blues  
Sign up for Happy Days  
Sing Me a Song of the Saddle  
Sweet Patootie Kitty  
There's a Home in Wyoming  
Twenty-One Years
- Sunset on the Desert (REP, 1942); Roy Rogers,  
Sons of the Pioneers
- Don Juan  
Faithful Pal of Mine  
It's a Lie  
Remember Me  
Yip Pe Yi Your Troubles Away
- Sunset Serenade (REP, 1942); Roy Rogers, Sons of  
the Pioneers  
He's a No Good Son-of-a-Gun  
I'm a Cowboy Rockefeller  
I'm Headin' for the Home Corral  
Mavourneen O'Shea  
Sandman Lullaby  
Song of the San Joaquin
- Susanna Pass (REP, 1947); Roy Rogers, Dale Evans,  
Estelita Rodriguez, Foy Willing & the Riders of  
the Purple Sage  
Brush those Tears From Your Eyes  
A Good, Good Mornin'  
Susanna Pass  
Two-Gun Rita
- Swing, Cowboy, Swing (T/C, 1944); Cal Shrum's  
Rhythm Rangers, Walt Shrum's Colorado Hill-  
billies
- Swing in the Saddle (COL, 1948); Hoosier Hot  
Shots, Slim Summerville, Big Boy Williams,  
Jimmy Wakely, Red River Dave  
Amor, Amor  
By the River St. Marie
- Swing the Western Way (COL, 1947); Hoosier Hot  
Shots, Johnny Bond
- Swing Your Partner (WB, 1937); Weaver Brothers,  
Penny Singleton  
Mountain Swingaroo  
The Old Apple Tree  
Swing Your Lady
- Swing Your Partner (REP, 1943); Lulubelle &  
Scotty, "Pappy" Cheshire, George "Shug" Fisher,  
Tennessee Ramblers  
Cheesecake  
In the Cool of the Evening
- Swingin' in the Barn (UNIV Short, 1940); Texas  
Jim Lewis & His Lone Star Cowboys
- Take Me Back to Oklahoma (MON, 1940); Tex Ritter,  
Bob Wills & the Texas Playboys  
Going Indian  
Good Old Oklahoma  
Kalamity Kate  
Lone Star Rag  
Playboy Special  
Take Me Back to Tulsa  
They're Hangin' Pappy in the Morning  
Village Blacksmith  
You are My Sunshine

Talented Tramp (ASTOR Short, 1949); Billy Grey,  
Sons of Texas

Tales of the West (UI, 1950); Tex Williams

High-Tailin' Along to Glory  
In Old Montana  
Shoot Him  
A Song in Your Heart  
Thar's Gold in Them Thar Hills  
Waltz of the West

Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground (UNIV,  
1943); Tex Ritter, Jimmy Wakely Trio, Jennifer  
Holt

Cielito Lindo  
The Drinks are on the House  
Ridin' Home  
Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground

Terror Trail (COL, 1946); Smiley Burnette, Ozie  
Waters & His Colorado Rangers

Tex Rides with the Boy Scouts (GN, 1938); Tex  
Ritter, The Beverly Hillbillies

Bad Brahma Bull  
The Girl I Left Behind Me  
Girl of the Prairie  
Headin' For My Texas Home

Tex Williams & His Western Caravan (UNIV Short,  
1947)

Texans Never Cry (COL, 1941); Gene Autry

Ride, Rangers, Ride  
Texans Never Cry

Texas Dynamo (COL, 1950); Smiley Burnette

Texas Man Hunt (PRC, 1942); Bill Boyd & the  
Cowboy Ramblers

The Texas Marshal (PRC, n/d); Art Davis

Texas Panhandle (COL, 1945); Spade Cooley, Caro-  
lina Cotton

Texas Rangers (PMT, 1936); Jack Oakie

Texas Stagecoach (COL, 1940); Sons of the  
Pioneers

Roll on With the Texas Express

Texas Stampede (COL, 1939); Sons of the Pioneers

The Boss is Hangin' Out a Rainbow  
Chant of the Wanderer  
I Grab My Saddle Horn and Blow  
Rise and Shine

Texas To Bataan (MON, 1942); John King

Goodbye Old Paint  
Home on the Range  
Me and My Pony

Texas Trouble Shooters (MON, 1942); John "Dusty"  
King

Deep in the Heart of Texas

That Texas Jamboree (COL, 1946); Hoosier Hot  
Shots, Deuce Spriggens & His Band, Plainsmen

This Gun for Hire (PMT, 1942); Veronica Lake

I've Got You  
Now You See It, Now You Don't

Three in the Saddle (PRC, 1945); Tex Ritter

Throw a Saddle on a Star (COL, 1946); Foy  
Willing & the Riders of the Purple Sage,  
Dinning Sisters, Hoosier Hot Shots, Ken Curtis

Thunder in God's Country (REP, 1951); Rex Allen

John Henry  
Melody of the Plains  
Mollie, Darling

Thunder Over the Prairie (COL, 1941); Cliff Ed-  
wards, Carl Shrum & His Rhythm Rangers

Thunder River Feud (MON, 1942); John "Dusty" King

What a Wonderful Day

The Thundering Frontier (COL, 1940); Sons of the  
Pioneers

The Thundering West (COL, 1939); Sons of the  
Pioneers

Cody of the Pony Express

Thundering Hoofs (RKO, 1941); Ray Whitley

Timber Trail (REP, 1948); Monte Hale, Foy Willing  
& the Riders of the Purple Sage

Tioga Kid (PRC, 1948); Eddie Dean

Tonto Basin Outlaws (MON, 1941); John King

Cabin of My Dreams

A Tornado in the Saddle (COL, 1942); Bob Wills &  
the Texas Playboys

Tornado Range (PRC, 1948); Eddie Dean, The  
Plainsmen

Trail Dust (PMT, 1936); Bill Boyd

Beneath the Western Sky  
Take Me Back to Those Wide Open Spaces  
Trail Dust

Trail of Lonesome Pine (PMT, 1936); Bill Boyd,  
Fuzzy Knight

Stack O'Lee Blues  
Trail of the Lonesome Pine  
When It's Twilight on the Trail

Trail of Robin Hood (REP, 1950); Roy Rogers,  
Foy Willing & the Riders of the Purple Sage

Every Day is Christmas in the West  
Get a Christmas Tree for Johnny  
Home Town Jubilee

Trail of Terror (PRC, 1944); Jim Newill, Jim  
(Tex) O'Brien

Trail of the Hawk (unk., 194?); Tommy Scott

Trail of the Silver Spurs (MON, 1941); John King  
Rainbow is Ridin' the Range

Trail of the Tumbleweed (unk.); Sons of the  
Pioneers

Rocky Roads

Trail Riders (MON, 1943); John King

Oh Suzanna

Trail to Laredo (COL, 1948); Smiley Burnette,  
Virginia Maxey, Bob Wills & the Cass County  
Boys

Trail to Mexico (MON, 1946); Jimmy Wakely,  
Fiddlin' Arthur Smith, The Saddle Pals, The  
Guadalajara Trio

Trail to San Antone (REP, 1947); Gene Autry,  
Cass County Boys

By the River of the Roses  
Cowboy Blues  
Down the Trail to San Antone  
Shame on You  
That's My Home

Trailin' West (WB, 1936); Dick Foran

Trailing Double Trouble (MON, 1940); John "Dusty"  
King, Johnny Bond

Train to Kansas (P/T, 1950); Johnnie Arizona

Treachery Rides the Range (WB, 1936); Dick Foran  
Leather and Steel  
Ridin' Home

Trigger, Jr. (REP, 1950); Roy Rogers, Dale Evans,  
Foy Willing & the Riders of the Purple Sage

Trigger Pals (GN, 1939); Art Jarrett

Lullaby Trail  
When a Cowboy Sings

Trouble at Melody Mesa (ASTOR, 1949); Cal Shrum

Trouble in Sundown (RKO, 1939); Ray Whitley

Trouble in Texas (GN, 1937); Rudy Sooter with  
Tex Ritter's Tornados

Down the Colorado Trail

An Old Cowman's Lament  
Rudy's Band Song  
Song of the Rodeo

Tulsa Kid (REP, 1940); Johnny Bond

Tumbledown Ranch in Arizona (MON, 1941); John  
"Dusty" King

All Hail Arizona  
Tumbledown Ranch in Arizona  
Wake up With the Dawn

Tumbleweed Tempos (UNIV Short, 1946); Spade  
Cooley & His Orchestra

Tumbleweed Trail (PRC, 1946); Eddie Dean, Sun-  
shine Boys

Careless Darling  
Lonesome Cowboy  
Tumbleweed Trail

Tumbling Tumbleweed (REP, 1935); Gene Autry,  
Smiley Burnette

Corn Fed and Dusty  
The Cowboy Medicine Show  
Ridin' down the Canyon  
That Silver Haired Daddy  
Tumbling Tumbleweeds

Twilight in the Sierras (REP, 1950); Roy Rogers,  
Dale Evans, Foy Willing & the Riders of the  
Purple Sage, Estelita Rodriguez

It's One Wonderful Day  
Pancho's Rancho  
Rootin' Tootin' Cowboy  
Twilight in the Sierras

Twilight on the Prairie (UNIV, 1944); Foy Willing  
& the Riders of the Purple Sage, Jack Tea-  
garden & His Orchestra, The Eight Buckaroos,  
Connie Haines

Don't You Ever Be a Cowboy  
I Get Mellow in the Yellow of the Moon  
Let's Love Again  
Salt Water Cowboy  
Texas Polka  
Where the Prairie Meets the Sky

Twilight on the Rio Grande (REP, 1947); Gene  
Autry, Cass County Boys

Great Grand-dad  
I Tipped My Hat and Slowly Rode Away  
It's a Lazy Day  
The Old Lamplighter  
Pretty Knife Grinder

Twilight on the Trail (PMT, 1941); Jimmy Wakely  
Trio, Brad King

Funny Old Hills  
Twilight on the Trail

Two Fisted Ranger (COL, 1940); Sons of the Pio-  
neers



Two Gun Man From Harlem (HW, 1938)

Under Arizona Skies (MON, 1946); Smith Ballew & the Sons of the Sage

Under California Stars (REP, 1948); Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

Dust  
Little Saddle Pals  
Rogers, King of the Cowboys  
Serenade To a Coyote  
Under California Stars

Under Colorado Skies (REP, 1947); Foy Willing & the Riders of the Purple Sage, Monte Hale

Blue Tailed Fly  
Holiday For the Blues  
Old Chisholm Trail  
San Antonio Rose

Under Fiesta Stars (REP, 1941); Gene Autry, Smiley Burnette

Come Along, Sing a Prairie Tune  
Keep It in the Family  
Purple Sage in the Twilight  
Under Fiesta Stars  
When You're Smiling

Under Nevada Skies (REP, 1946); Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Sons of the Pioneers

Anytime that I'm With You  
I Want To Go West  
Ne-Hah-Nee  
Sea Goin' Cowboy

Under Western Skies (REP, 1938); Roy Rogers, Frankie Marvin, Maple City Four

Back to the Backwoods  
Dust  
Rhythm of the Range  
Rogers for Congressman  
Send My Mail To the County Jail  
That Pioneer Mother of Mine  
When a Cowboy Sings a Song

Underground Rustlers (MON, 1941); John "Dusty" King

Utah (REP, 1945); Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers

Beneath a Utah Sky  
Cowboy Blues  
Five Little Miles  
Lonesome Cowboy Blues  
Thank Dixie For Me  
Utah  
Utah Trail  
Welcome Home Miss Bryant  
Wild and Wooly Gals from out Chicago Way

Utah Trail (GN, 1938); Rudy Sooter and Tex Ritter's Tornadoes

Give Me Back My Saddle

A Roamin' I Will Be  
There's No Pal Like a Pony  
Utah Trail

Utah Wagon Train (REP, 1951); Rex Allen

Valley of Fire (COL, 1951); Gene Autry

Here's To the Ladies  
On Top of Old Smokey

Vengeance of the West (COL, 1942); Tex Ritter

Along the Trail Somewhere  
Only Yesterday

Vigilante's Ride (COL, 1943); Bob Wills & the Texas Playboys

Arizona Moon  
Last Outpost in the Sky  
My Tucson Gal  
Westward Bound

Village Barn Dance (unk., 1939); Moon Mullican

WLS Gang (ACME, 1943); Curly Miller

Wagon Master (Tiffany, 192?); Ken Maynard

Wagon Team (COL, 1952); Gene Autry, Cass County Boys

Howdy Friends and Neighbors  
I'm Back in the Saddle Again  
In and Out of the Jailhouse  
I've Been Invited To a Jubilee

Wagon Train (RKO, 1940); Ray Whitley

Wagonmaster (RKO, 1950); Sons of the Pioneers

Chuckawalla Swing  
Rollin' Dust  
Song of the Wagonmaster  
Wagons West

Wall Street Cowboy (REP, 1939); Roy Rogers

Me and the Rollin' Sand  
Ride 'Em Cowboy  
Ridin' down the Rainbow Trail  
That's My Louisiana

Water Rustlers (GN, 1939); Dorothy Page

Way up Thar (M/S Short, 1935); Sons of the Pioneers

Webb Pierce and His Wanderin' Boys (UI Short, 1955); Webb Pierce and His Band, Hank Penny, Sue Thompson, Marion Colby, Red Sovine

West of Abilene (COL, 1940); Sons of the Pioneers

West of Carson City (UNIV, n/d); Bob Baker  
Let's Go

- West of Cheyenne (COL, 1938); Sons of the Pioneers  
 Biscuit Blues  
 Night Falls on the Prairie
- West of Dodge City (COL, 1947); Smiley Burnette,  
 Mustard and Gravy
- West of Laramie (UI Short, 1949); Tex Williams  
 and His Band
- West of Pinto Basin (MON, 1940); Jerry Smith,  
 John King  
 Ridin' the Trail Tonight  
 Rhythm of the Saddle  
 That Little Prairie Gal O' Mine
- West of Texas (PRC, 1944); James Newill
- West of the Alamo (MON, 1946); Jimmy Wakely, Ray  
 Whitley, Fiddlin' Arthur Smith, The Saddle  
 Pals  
 I'm Always Blue For You
- West of Santa Fe (COL, 1938); Sons of the Pioneers  
 Hello Way up There  
 Song of the Prairie  
 Tumblin' Tumbleweed  
 When the Prairie Sun Says Good Mornin'
- West of Tombstone (COL, 1942); Cliff Edwards  
 (Ukulele Ike)  
 Get Along Little Pony  
 Midnight Blues  
 We'll All Be Together
- West to Glory (PRC, 1947); Eddie Dean, Sunshine  
 Boys  
 Cry, Cry, Cry  
 In the Shadow of the Mission  
 West to Glory
- Westbound Stage (MON, 1939); Tex Ritter  
 It's All Over Now  
 Trail to Mexico
- Western Caravans (COL, 1939); Sons of the  
 Pioneers
- Western Jamboree (REP, 1938); Gene Autry, Smiley  
 Burnette  
 Balloon Song  
 I Love the Morning  
 November Moon  
 Roll on Little Dogies, Roll On  
 Round-up Time in Texas
- Western Trails (unk.); Bob Baker  
 Ridin' down that Utah Trail  
 When a Cowboy's Day is Done
- Western Welcome (RKO Short, 1938); Ray Whitley
- Western Whoopee (UI Short, 1949); Tex Williams  
 and His Band
- Westward Trail (PRC, 1948); Eddie Dean, The  
 Plainsmen
- What Am I Bid (unk.); Tex Ritter
- Where the Buffalo Roam (MON, 1938); Tex Ritter,  
 Louise Massey and the Westerners, Jack Ingram,  
 Bob Terry  
 Bunkhouse Jamboree  
 Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie  
 Home on the Range  
 In the Heart of the West  
 Shoot the Buffalo  
 Troubador of the Prairie  
 Where the Buffalo Roam
- Where the West Begins (MON, 1938); Jack Randall,  
 Ray Whitley
- Whirlwind (COL, 1951); Gene Autry, Smiley Bur-  
 nette  
 As Long as I live  
 Twiddle O'Twill  
 Whirlwind
- Whirlwind Raiders (COL, 1948); Doye O'Dell and  
 the Radio Rangers  
 Blue Tailed Fly
- The Whispering Skull (PRC, 1944); Tex Ritter  
 In Case You Change Your Mind  
 It's Never Too Late
- Wild Bill Hickok Rides (WB, 1941); Constance  
 Bennett  
 The Lady Got a Shady Deal
- Wild Country (PRC, 1947); Eddie Dean, Sunshine  
 Boys  
 Ain't No Gal Got a Brand on Me  
 Saddle With a Golden Horn
- Wild Horse Rodeo (REP, 1937); Gene Autry, Roy  
 Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers  
 My Madonna of the Trail  
 When the Round-up Days are Over
- Wild Horses Round-Up (AMB, 1937); Kermit Maynard  
 Ki-Yippee  
 Men of the Saddle  
 Shadows of the Trail
- Wild West (PRC, 1946); Eddie Dean  
 Elmer, the Knock-Kneed Cowboy  
 I Can Tell By the Stars  
 Journey's End  
 Ride on the Tide of a Song

Winged Victory (20th, 1944); Tex Ritter  
 Someone's in the Kitchen With Dinah

Winners of the West (COL, n/d); Dick Foran

Winning of the West (COL, 1953); Gene Autry,  
 Smiley Burnette

Cowboy Blues  
 Cowpoke Poking Along  
 Find Me My Trusty Forty-Five

Wrangler's Roost (MON, 1941); John King

Joggin'  
 Wrangler's Roost

Wyoming Hurricane (COL, 1944); Bob Wills and  
 the Texas Playboys

I Hear You Talking  
 It's a Grand Old World

Night on the Range  
 Today is Election Day

Yellow Rose of Texas (REP, 1944); Roy Rogers,  
 Sons of the Pioneers

Down in the Old Town Hall  
 Down Mexico Way  
 Lucky Me, Unlucky You  
 Show Boat  
 Song of the Rover  
 Take It Easy  
 Texas Trail  
 Two-Seated Saddle on a One-Gaited Horse  
 Western Wonderland  
 Yellow Rose of Texas

Young Bill Hickok (REP, 1940); Roy Rogers

Young Buffalo Bill (REP, 1940); Roy Rogers  
 Blow, Breeze, Blow

--University of California  
 Los Angeles, CA



# SIGNIFYING BANJOS

by

Archie Green

When *Bonnie and Clyde* appeared during 1967, I had been teaching folksong courses at the University of Illinois, Urbana. The instant hit appealed widely and, seemingly, all students saw it in the same campus-town theater. Thus, in class, we could talk about this powerful movie's music. My students knew silent films only as curiosities; in contemporaneous movies, they did not and could not separate plot, character, or setting from sound track. From my perspective, I suggested that *Bonnie and Clyde*'s "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" (first recorded in 1949 by Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs) was inappropriate to this particular film. I felt that its producer and director should have selected a western swing fiddle tune--perhaps by Bob Wills--to mark Oklahoma's farm-town ambience in the early 1930s.

To my ears, the bluegrass dazzler "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" did not represent the kind of regional music Bonnie and Clyde might have heard during the years of their adventures. However, such incongruence in time and place failed to trouble my students. They had enjoyed Earl Scruggs's banjo in the movie's love-making and auto-chasing scenes. Further, they heard this banjo as making quintessentially old-time music. For them, by definition, bluegrass music conveyed rural imagery. Bonnie and Clyde lived in the boondocks and, deservedly, were marked by backwoods symbols.

My memory of differential response by teacher and students to a bluegrass breakdown in a 1967 film has surfaced with the publication in 1984 of two breathtaking banjo books. I urge JEMFQ readers to examine or purchase both: A) Robert Lloyd Webb, *Ring the Banjar!* (Cambridge, Mass: Institute of Technology Museum; B) Akiro Tsumura, *Banjos: The Tsumura Collection*, Tokyo, Kodansha International.

The Webb book is a hundred-page illustrated catalog of an exhibition held at the MIT Museum, April through September, 1984. The Tsumura book is a lavish pictorial of a world-famous private collection amassed by a Japanese businessman and Dixieland jazz buff. Together, these attractive publications mix history, musicology, and bibliography, with photos of rare instruments. The auxiliary photos of assorted ephemera--manufacturers's catalogs, song folios, patent drawings, phonograph labels, curios--complement the instru-

ments and enhance their power.

Each book raises challenging intellectual matters: What does a banjo signify when it stands alone in a photo? What meaning accrues to this same banjo after an artist frames it, in a painting or print, by performance or enactment? How many musics do viewers hear in mind's ear when they see artistic depictions of banjos? These and other questions resonate in every page of the Webb and Tsumura books.

Teachers of language and literature place heavy emphasis on conceptual keywords such as "sign," "symbol," "signifier," "emblem," "icon," "marker." We have learned from art history, literary criticism, cultural anthropology, linguistics, and sister disciplines, to ask how humans invest acts and objects with meaning. A skilled banjoist can play "Foggy Mountain Breakdown," "Some of These Days," "Liza Jane," "Shake That Thing," "William Tell Overture," or "Old Black Joe." On hearing these discrete numbers, audience members shift their mental templates from single artifact to the signifying roles of banjo song texts. The banjoist who dips into a copious songbag prepares listeners to imagine the instrument in the hands of supplicant, scoundrel, trickster, mountain hero, plantation victim, freedom fighter.

Essentially, in this graphics feature, I bring together a number of representations which hold considerable metaphoric tension. Probably, more pictures of "signifying banjos" exist than of any other American instrument. To the best of my knowledge, no composer has ever titled a banjo instrumental with the tag "signify." Nor has an artist used "Signifying Banjo" to name a painting or print. Ideally, we need a scholarly monograph or a coffee-table book (or both) on the banjo in art with a text that treats complex matters of musical iconography invoked by our long-necked friend.

Before offering specific examples of art, proper to such a book, I comment on banjo music in a film more recent than *Bonnie and Clyde*. During 1972, James Dickey's novel *Deliverance* (1970) reached millions of cinema fans. The movie *Deliverance* helped popularize "Duelling Banjos" far beyond its original bluegrass audience. In 1955, Don Reno and Arthur Smith had

recorded "Feuding Banjos"; their composition caught on with fellow bluegrass performers. However Eric Weissberg and Steve Mandell, two "folk revival" performers, arranged the film's "Duelling Banjos." This composition's history--subject of a court suit--need not detain us.

Here, I wish to report the complaints of several of my friends. Appalachian activists, that this film misused "pure" bluegrass music by denigrating mountain life. These critics--elevating bluegrass sounds to make Appalachian integrity--were devastated by *Deliverance's* portraits of degenerates. In short, the banjo itself duelled: mountain exemplars vs. Hollywood exploiters. I do not share this dismal view of James Dickey's novel, nor of the movie it inspired. However, I must stress that the film's musical contest between city visitor and mountain child seemed to some Appalachians to be deeply insulting. These partisans heard "Duelling Banjos" not as an upbeat tune, but rather as an ideological report card noting a fundamental clash between the best in regional folk culture and the worst in national popular culture.

One sees a banjo played in *Deliverance*; none appears in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Nevertheless, both films prepare us cinemagraphically for a glance back at two centuries of musical messages. Banjos have been integral to our visual landscape for such a long time that we have not always wished to decode their meaning. At this juncture, I reproduce a number of itmes which will suggest various interpretive strategies to *JEMFO* readers.

\* \* \*

At the American Revolution's end, the Library Company of Philadelphia planned a new building. Samuel Jennings, a Philadelphian then studying art in London, conceived an allegorical painting to honor the new republic's center of learning. By trans-Atlantic mail, he suggested Greek mythological subjects, but the Library Company's building committee countered that it wanted the goddess Liberty presiding over art and science. Additionally, the committee requested the artist to include a "Group of Negroes" in his painting. The building's architect was a member of the Society of Friends and an active abolitionist. Hence, he and his colleagues desired their recent liberation from Britain to be extended to all slaves in the United States.

During 1792, Jennings shipped the finished oil painting, "Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences," from London to Philadelphia. His goddess, indeed, held books and surveyed a palette lyre, geographer's globe, and similar constructs. As well, she held a broken chain underfoot symbolizing Quaker opposition to slavery. In the foreground, three blacks greeted Miss Liberty in the background, another group observed and listened to a blind banjo picker and his lead boy.

Today, upon examining this painting, we can only guess at its original aural tones. One woman in the background holds aloft a laurel-wreathed

pole decorated with a French Revolutionary cap. Perhaps the banjo player leads in a victorious liberty dance; perhaps he accompanies a sacred hymn; perhaps he beats out an ancestral call. We shall never know what music Jennings intended us to "hear." As we "read" his painting today, the banjo marks freedom for colonists and anticipated freedom for slaves. Truly, this instrument continues to "speak" in a loud voice.

I know of no painting of an American banjoist prior to 1792. Sir Hans Sloane, a physician in Jamaica during 1687, saw and heard a gourd-like banjo identified as a "strum-strum," and included one in an illustration for a *Voyage to the Islands* ... (1707). Did any artists limn banjo performers during Colonial years? Until such items surface, we credit Samuel Jennings with depicting the first American banjo player in living performance. It is refreshing, today, to look back two centuries and see an early black folk musician treated with full dignity.

The University of Illinois Press, in 1972, published Dena J. Epstein's *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*. Among many fine illustrations, she included the banjo detail from Jennings's painting (still in the possession of the Library Company of Philadelphia). When the UI Press reissued her book in paperback (1984), a thoughtful designer selected Jennings's banjoist for the book's cover (reproduced here). Hence, one element within an allegorical painting of 1792, nearly two centuries old, continues to signify roots in Afro-American folk music. Wherever Epstein's book is now read and housed, a pictured blind musician helps us comprehend the banjo's plural meanings.

Samuel Jennings, working within abolitionist norms, saw black people in positive terms. By contrast, throughout the nineteenth century, a host of lithographic artists employed by song publishers turned out portraits of grotesque banjo players on the minstrel stage. Such folio illustrations have been reproduced widely in books on American entertainment, at times, simply as period pieces, and, at times, with modern commentaries explaining away their outdated values. Here, I offer three depictions of burnt-cork banjoists with but a few contextual details.

Readers need bear in mind upon encountering examples of musical art from this genre's dominant decades, 1830-60, that minstrelsy encompassed solo song-and-dance men as well as huge troupes. In shows large and small two dominant figures emerged: the coarse scarecrow Jim Crow; the ultra-modish dandy Zip Coon. (We continue to see such dualism enacted in television situation comedies by white and black actors, alike.) Beyond these characterizations, minstrel performers presented a second polarity: an obvious burlesque of black life; a pretended authenticity in plantation mores.

In early shows a soloist, often with banjo in hand, sought to resolve minstrelsy's inherent tensions by featuring hit songs. These numbers,

humorous or sentimental, often masked deep anxieties hidden within race relations. In elaborate shows, the loquacious interlocutor and his captive endmen took on the task of pulling themes into a coherent whole. The interlocutor, as master of ceremonies, required no instrument; endmen, at this beck and call, used tambourine and bones as comic props.

I would suggest that we look back at the minstrel banjo, not only as an accompanying "voice," but also as a unifying symbol. More than other instruments on the stage, it harmonized the discordant themes structured into minstrelsy. The long, scroll-peghead banjo, cradled by a rascal in long-striped (Uncle Sam) pants, flowery shirt, and top hat, came to mark minstrelsy itself. For a century, Americans thought of banjo hits such as "Old Dan Tucker," "Buffalo Gals," or "Oh, Susanna" as national songs, close to patriotic anthems. In this sense, the minstrel banjoist became a little cousin of Uncle Sam.

During 1844, Keith's Music Publishing House (Boston) issued a folio, "Carter's Melodies," holding four songs: "Lucy Neal," "Ring Boys Ring," "Lovely Fan," and "Alabama Joe." The cover featured James P. (Jim) Carter of the highly popular Virginia Serenaders. We assume that the artist who portrayed Carter had seen him perform and that the lithographic drawing, shown here, was realistic. Students of vernacular architecture will enjoy the cover background's pointed-roof hut under the palm tree. The Boston publisher's attempt to replicate an African housing pattern served, of course, to lend authenticity to Carter's instrument and songs.

Four years before "Carter's Melodies" appeared, Henry Prentice (also of Boston) published a folio featuring an unnamed singer of "Alabama Joe," or a singer who named himself Alabama Joe. Show business constantly brought song texts and singers into close conjunction. Regardless of details in history and biography, I prefer the Prentice (1840) cover to that of Keith (1844). The first banjo is horizontal; the second, tilted. This slight change in position, for me, makes one banjo a more powerful instrument than its mate. In my eyes, Alabama Joe uses his banjo to dissect space, to cut through the very sham he personifies on stage.

On the Civil War's eve, a New England folk artist painted a "Banjo Player" (oil on canvas). In 1860, D. Morrill signed and dated this work which now belongs to the Wadsworth Atheneum at Hartford, Connecticut. Can anyone who compares the painting to the Keith cover doubt that Morrill possessed the folio? Artists at some distance (culturally or geographically) from art schools trained themselves as best they could by copying available engravings or lithographs. Music covers made perfect models.

Art historians and folklorists now debate central differences for definitions of *folk art*. Should it be described mainly by its non-academic style or, alternatively, by esthetic codes rooted

in community life? I leave this debate to others by noting only that Morrill's status as a folk artist derives from stylistic norms set by dealers and critics: simplified, flattened, naive, unsophisticated. Morrill is not called a folk artist by virtue of an enclaved group's special esthetic practices.

Today, we relish Morrill's artistic metamorphosis visible in the act of turning a professional lithograph into a folk painting. Beyond the retrospective labeling of his "Banjo Player" as a piece of folk art, we can also speculate over Morrill's sense of the banjo. I suggest that he heightened the banjo significance by divorcing it from song text, stage hit, concert circuit, or minstrel troupe. We cannot reconstruct this "unknown" painter's intent, and can but hint at his community's nature. However, we continue to see Morrill's banjoist on museum wall and in art book. Today, with the vision of time, this player seems to have gathered to himself platonic essences from a thousand minstrel stages.

Before the Civil War, black folk musicians and professional white minstrels in black-face shared the banjo in artistic depictions. From 1870 to 1900, this instrument moved in other directions in American society: classical concert stage, elegant home parlor, cowboy bunkhouse, mountain cabin, ragtime saloon. Some of these "new" settings, but not all, appealed to schooled artists. I cite a few works to mark the banjo's voyage across societal seas.

William Sidney Mount, the common man's delineator in the Age of Jackson, offered many paintings of musicians in bucolic settings at Long Island. During 1856, he finished companion portraits of "The Banjo Player" and "The Bones Player." Both were engraved immediately for inexpensive reproductions and proved widely popular. Mount's banjoist suggests neither rural life nor the minstrel stage; his colorful cap hints at the exotic. Who knows what social strata Mount intended?

Eastman Johnson, a genre painter who championed the American Scene, in "Confidence and Admiration" (1859) clearly departed from theatrical norms. In this domestic painting, he showed a black banjoist, perhaps a father, playing for a little boy at his side. Robert Lloyd Webb found Johnson's title rich enough to be reused in heading the main essay in the 1984 MIT exhibit catalog. During 1893, Henry Tanner, a distinguished black artist, painted a scene similar to Johnson's. Tanner named his work realistically, "The Banjo Lesson." The contrast between various artists who portrayed banjoists is instructive. Just as Mount's setting was ambiguous, Johnson and Tanner placed their teachers squarely in Afro-American folk society as it continued beyond Emancipation.

Thomas Eakins, Philadelphia's superb realist, about 1900, completed a watercolor and an oil, both titled "Cowboy Singing." Eakins had



# SINFUL TUNES and SPIRITUALS

**Black Folk Music to the Civil War**



~ DENA J. EPSTEIN ~



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Emporium, Cambridge, MA)







GOIN' UP CRIPPLE CREEK





By the author of "HOME TO HARLEM"

**BANJO  
McKAY**

# BANJO

CLAUDE MCKAY

HARPERS



HARPER & BROTHERS  
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# BANJOS

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lived on a Dakota Badlands ranch where he heard singers accompanying themselves with banjo and harmonica. His "Cowboy Singing" is hailed today as one of the strongest paintings in the long tradition of buckskin-clad scouts, pioneers, westerners. Banjo enthusiasts treasure this watercolor and oil for documenting the instrument's spread to an occupational group before 1890.

Mary Cassatt, one of America's most sensitive impressionists, turned constantly to subjects of mothers and daughters, women and children. During 1894, she completed "The Banjo Lesson" (pastel on paper). A woman holds a banjo on her lap, plucking it with left, while a young girl behind her looks intently at the frets. The player's blue and apricot dress suggests elegance. I have always assumed, on viewing Cassatt's banjoist, that her lesson involved classical music. Do others share this association? (on front cover)

I believe that readers of the *JEMFO* have seen (or can find) the works mentioned above by Mount, Johnson, Tanner, and Eakins. We reproduce here the less well known Cassatt piece on this issue's cover. From the fine-art portfolio, I select but one "unknown" item for reproduction in this feature: Maynard Dixon's "College Cowboy" or "Cowboy With Banjo" (1901). Dixon is generally associated with native American life in the Southwest. Sensitive to tribal mores and beliefs, with great success, his paintings joined precise ethnography to sacred abstraction. "College Cowboy," a straightforward sketch, does not hold the power of Dixon's paintings. Made at the P Ranch, Warner Valley, Oregon, the drawing goes back to travel in the Northwest where Dixon sought material for magazine illustrations.

We generally expect a work of art to make its direct appeal before we become conscious of formal title. Intrigued by "College Cowboy," I corresponded with Professor Donald Hagerty at David, California, who reported that Dixon's subject had been an eastern college student out West, in 1901, for a summer of "seasoning." Dixon's alternate name for the P Ranch drawing, "Cowboy With Banjo," suggests an old hand--a carrier of occupational and regional tradition. However, his first title is ambiguous. Does it imply that Dixon knew his subject to be an "outsider," and used the tag to make a point? Or, did the artist comment, by a naming act, that the college youth had turned to a folk instrument in seeking authentic "inside" credentials?

Thomas Eakins and Maynard Dixon help us see banjos on the range between 1887 and 1901. We know that Appalachians, also, enjoyed this instrument during these same years. Students of country music, in its many forms, have devoted considerable attention to the evolution of the mountain banjo, its styles, and repertoires. Here, I reproduce the earliest visual representation known to me, of an Appalachian banjoist.

Emma Bell Miles--lowland born, but a mountain woman by choice--married a "local" on Walden's Ridge above Chattanooga. Her bicultural experience

proving difficult, she turned to poetry and painting for release. Miles published *The Spirit of the Mountains* in 1905, but it remained obscure for decades. In 1978, the University of Tennessee Press reissued this fine book with prefatory material by Roger Abrahams and David Whisnant. Both editions held a half-dozen watercolors, rendered in black and white. "Goin' Up Cripple Creek" graced the chapter "Some Real American Music."

Miles's banjo player defies mountain stereotypes of coonskin caps, long rifles, and whisky jugs. Her musician is pensive in mood, plainly dressed, and correct in picking technique. Her watercolor serves as a touchstone against which to judge subsequent clichés about mountain music. It deserves wide viewing as an early--if not the first--Appalachian banjoist treated with full fidelity.

During 1905, Emma Bell Miles reached but a tiny band of readers, while local-color fiction writers achieved huge audiences in journals of national circulation. *Harper's Magazine* (February, 1916) included Louise Rand Bascom's "The Better Man." Its young hero, Andy Coe, makes a cat-hide banjo and leaves his Appalachian home to learn to read music and gain fame. In his theater debut he performs "Bonnie Blue Eyes," but is cheated and patronized by a city playwright. Andly flees, making the long journey on foot back to the highlands.

Bascom's story included six drawings by Watson Barratt. I reproduce two: Andy leaving home; Andy's path to the city. The banjo's details are lost (in *Harper's* reproduction from original drawing to magazine page and re-use via photography and offset printing for the *JEMFO*). However, each cut now calls attention to a home-made banjo within the context of urban exploitation of folk music. Performers and collectors of the fretless banjo, and its music, will appreciate the documentary significance of Bascom's fiction and Barratt's illustrations of 1916. Bascom understood Andy's simple treasure as an icon of mountain purity--a view shared by some critics of *Deliverance's* characters and their television pals in "The Dukes of Hazzard."

The movement of the banjo from the minstrel stage into Anglo-American folk society did not destroy the instrument's tie to black life. In the mix of folk and popular musics generated within Afro-American communities--ragtime, jazz, blue, gospel--some black performers continued to "ring the banjar." Ideally, we need visual representations of all these scenes; here, I select but one unusual illustration from the Jazz Age.

Claude McKay's *Banjo*, a landmark Afro-American novel, dates to 1929. Its West Indian author had lived in France after World War One, where he observed expatriate blacks: lost intellectuals, stranded musicians, nationalists, revolutionists. His rewarding book treats American beachcombers in Marseilles, but rises

from the ranks of picaresque tales by attention to "negritude," an early code word for black spirit or soul.

McKay's leading character, "a child of the Cotton Belt," Lincoln Agrippa Dailey--otherwise, Banjo--is a pleasure-loving vagabond, cunning and creative. His sign is the banjo; his theme song, "Shake That Thing":

Old Uncle Jack, the jelly-roll king,  
Just got back from shaking that thing!  
Old Brother Mose is sick in bed.  
Doctor says he is almost dead  
From shaking that thing .... (pp. 47-49)

Readers who have heard the traditional poetic toast, "Signifying Monkey," and its bawdy parallels, will appreciate McKay's episodic novel as a signifying narrative rich in vernacular speech and word-play. Recent critics who have turned back to *Banjo*, have hailed its early probing of black consciousness. Within this large conceptual frame, the banjo calls attention to diverse paths of Afro-American expression.

We sense the tension felt by *Banjo*'s characters when Banjo forms an "orchestra," and his companion Goosey chides him:

Banjo is bondage. It's the instrument of cotton and massa and missus and black mammy.... Let the white folks play the banjo if they want to keep on remembering all the Black Joes singing and the hell they made them live in. (p. 90).

Banjo rejects this painful association. His magic instrument, even with the blues, makes joyful music, marking his vitality and sustaining his identity ("moh than a gal, moh than a pal, it's mahself"). Losing his banjo, he is reduced at one point to eke out a living by unloading coal. Yet, he knows in his heart that a banjo is not a stevedore's shovel.

On Banjo's affirmation of his instrument's significance, I leave Claude McKay's fine novel, and its Art Moderne dust jacket. I do not know the name of the artist commissioned by Harper & Brothers to prepare *Banjo*'s wrapper, a stylized scene of beach boys on the docks (shown here). Nor do I know how many of these jackets have survived since 1929 in libraries and private collections--probably only a handful. Regardless of rarity, each find enlarges our banjo cornucopia. Perhaps a willing reader will undertake a monograph or coffee-table book on the banjo in art. The *JEMFQ* welcomes illustrations and commen-

taries from fans who know this instrument in its many incarnations.

To close, I refer back to the two books noted upon opening this feature. For Webb's MIT catalog, I depart from a strict art reproduction to a craft detail. In 1948, Stu Jamieson purchased at Northhampton, Massachusetts, a home-made pine banjo with a peghead carving (shown here) of a little man straddling the neck's end. For some years, this unusual item has been on display at the Smithsonian Institution, where curators have assumed it to be an Afro-American artifact. This association is supported by a sketch (shown here) made in New Orleans during 1819 by the noted architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe. His drawing shows a similar man standing on the neck of a gourd banjo. Until additional evidence surfaces we are still puzzled by the date and background of the Northhampton banjo.

Robert Sayers, an anthropologist at the California Academy of Sciences and banjo enthusiast, has suggested two other traditions which may have influenced the Northhampton find: New Englanders, in the last century, carved similar figures on a variety of classical stringed instruments; such carvings have been found also in Europe. Carvers from a number of discrete cultures have used anthropomorphic figures to top walking sticks. Can any reader add information in this area?

For Tsumura's book, I reproduce this inside title page showing a ceramic Mephistopheles playing the banjo. This devil sounds his own music for all who know the Faust legend in its many forms. However, I am attracted to this curio, not to evoke the story of a soul-buying, music-trading devil, but rather to bridge this instrument's wide metaphoric range. I remain intrigued by the possible relationship, in spirit between a French ceramicist's satanic musician and a Northhampton (?) carver's sacred (?) totem.

In pictures above, we have seen the banjoist portrayed variously as a black man symbolizing freedom, a minstrel star, a western cowboy, an Appalachian mountaineer, and a Marseilles beachcomber. I believe all these types have borrowed some Mephistophelian fire, for they have given audiences a generous share of interpretive themes. As seeing and hearing are linked in consciousness, we all ponder the banjo's signifying role. This commentary's depictions help each viewer/auditor fashion personal imagery to encompass all the banjo's meanings.

--San Francisco, California

ROBERT CANTWELL'S *BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN:  
THE MAKING OF THE OLD SOUTHERN SOUND.*

by

Mayne Smith

(Mayne Smith's responses to bluegrass music are those of both musician and scholar. He wrote the first academic thesis on bluegrass ("Bluegrass Music and Musicians: an Introductory Study of a Musical Style in its Cultural Context [Indiana University, 1964]) which became the basis for the first article in a scholarly journal on the subject ("An Introduction to Bluegrass," *Journal of American Folklore*, 1965). He has been playing bluegrass, country, and folk music professionally for over twenty years.)

In a complex and often extravagant writing style, Robert Cantwell has produced the first book-length assessment of the place of bluegrass music in our cultural history. Although it falls short as an analysis of the full range of the music and musicians (thus belying its title), *Bluegrass Breakdown* (Music in American Life Series. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984) is a landmark in the academic discussion of musical popular culture, and should be read carefully by serious students of hillbilly music.

*Bluegrass Breakdown* explores not what bluegrass is but what it means in American consciousness. Making little effort to support his findings with the kinds of facts that social scientists depend on, Cantwell examines Bill Monroe's music and its sources mainly through recordings and the work of other authors. The discussion hinges on ideas that will be unfamiliar to many musicians and bluegrass devotees, and nearly ignores the facets of bluegrass that do not fit into his central argument, especially the 25-year-old urban extensions of the bluegrass movement.

Cantwell's great strength is the ability to perceive and express significance in facts that are largely known to us. I was struck, for instance, by the aptness of an early passage about the context of Monroe's beginnings as a performer in the 1920s:

Monroe entered professional music at a juncture in his life at which his personal past had slipped irretrievably behind him, into the rural world which was itself in decay and to which he could not return except in his music. But Monroe's personal experience repeated the experience of thousands of people

like him, his audiences, who had left Appalachia for the industrial North, an experience which literally reiterated what in effect was a kind of national myth, expressed in popular music, of an expulsion from an idyllic South into an urban and technological wilderness in the North.... Monroe entered professional music, too, at a time when the hillbilly musician was valued for his power to represent and evoke the past, so that the musician's very purpose was to explore and in some measure recover his own tradition: in Monroe's case, that recovery extended years later to his personal experience, particularly that of his early youth, transfigured by time and distance, and especially to his earliest musical influences, which became for him quasi-sacred prototypes. (47-48)

The full scope of Cantwell's unifying theme does not become evident until his final chapter. Since it would have assisted my first reading of the book to know where it was headed, I will present what I think is a fair, if simplified, version of the central argument here.

Cantwell wants to link the power of bluegrass to the heart of American consciousness. His discussion derives, logically, from the perception that our most important cultural forms embody the interplay of Afro- and Euro-American traditions, since the tension between them is felt by everyone.

...the white fascination with the black race, as well as white racism



itself, is psychologically in the nature of romantic love...an attraction that turns into repugnance and fear when the framework collapses. (p. 266)

Citing many authorities on the long history of American blackface minstrelsy, Cantwell argues convincingly that this movement is uniquely important.

It has been the point of this book to show that for better or worse such social lines as lie between the minstrel and his audience... become thresholds across which romantic ambivalence...Minstrelsy in America stands at the Mason-Dixon line which history has drawn across the human spirit.

The real history of minstrelsy in the country, were it to be honestly and comprehensively written, would touch one way or another upon every form of popular music we have and on some part of our composed tradition. (p. 257)

According to Cantwell, the Grand Ole Opry is a direct descendant of the blackface tradition. George Hay, the Opry's "Solemn Old Judge," incorporated the stereotypes of the minstrel stage,

reserving the interlocutor's role for himself and placing his rural musicians in roles formerly occupied by stage representations of Negroes. When the radio program expanded into a theatrical production...Hay continued the theme, substituting painted barn beams, hayricks, rail fences, and the like for the minstrel show's cabin, cotton patch, levee and riverboat and costuming his performers--tradesmen and artisans who had at first appeared at the studio in business suits--in overalls, straw hats, kerchiefs, and the like. (p. 254)

But when Bill Monroe brought his new band to the Opry in 1939, he did not accept the bumpkin image.

Monroe's early performances on the Opry were energized by an effort to combat, by means of hyperbole, the Opry's implied ridicule of hillbilly music....With unbelievably quick tempos, frighteningly high pitches, razor-keen harmonies, and sizzling instrumental breaks Monroe pressed the Opry's engines of parody to a level of performance for which they were never intended, and did so in a deadpan serious way...which directed all the force of ridicule away from hillbilly music toward the Grand Ole Opry itself. (p. 272)

Monroe shifted himself out of the hick role to that of the interlocutor, mediating between his "Boys" and the Opry audience. (Cantwell does not discuss how this shift avoided offending Hay.) Thus Monroe found a way to retain and elaborate minstrelsy's use of vital Afro-American musical elements without making a caricature of himself or his music--even though the quintessential minstrel instrument, the five-string banjo, became prominent in the sound of the Blue Grass Boys.

The greatness of Monroe's achievement lies in his creation of,

an Afro-American ensemble form in the body of traditional Appalachian music. As such it brings to completion the Americanization of Appalachian music, carrying it out of the mountain fastness in which the British folk legacy had been longest preserved and into the rhythmically charged atmosphere of our native music. (p. 273)

*Bluegrass Breakdown* is at its best in describing the constituent musical elements that went into this mix. The result was a coupling of Euro- and Afro-American "stiffness and spontaneity, formality and informality, rigorous striving and cool nonchalance" that evoked, in modern garb, "the primal garden of the first frontier" (273). This is what Cantwell calls "the old southern sound."

His reference to the primal garden will alert scholarly types to the fact that Cantwell is joining a host of American literary historians in examining this mythical conception as a dominant, though often unconscious, theme in our culture. But Cantwell's thinking depends mainly on an idea of "romance" derived from the work of the eminent literary critic, Northrop Frye. Romance is most concisely described as "'the genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate,' whose character reflects the pre-occupations of the heart, and whose structure the tensions of human ambivalence" (216). The romantic figure of the outcast "I" represented by the singer in many (if not most) bluegrass songs is estranged from a lover or family, wandering in a fruitless quest for the contentment he left behind back in the hills (227-232). He appears, however, within the socially integrated structure of the family-like band, headed by its father (or brother) figure(s) and embodying the conservative musical values of the old home (163-167).

Bluegrass shows and festivals bring together a community in a camp-meeting setting, under the banner of the "Father of Bluegrass," Bill Monroe. Cantwell equates this setting with the happy ending of the literary romantic story in "cheerful social harmony" (253).

If romance obliterates identity,



this consummation recovers it, and in literature is always accompanied by some festive ritual or party, usually in a pastoral setting...whose sympathetic magic suggests that an integrated and harmonious social order...has its basis in Nature. That is why, on the edge of this happy scene, we inevitably find the *agriokos*--the rustic, the rube, the country bumpkin. He is the bridge between society and nature by revealing in his hilarious difficulties with social roles...that these are, after all, artificial, that beneath them lies an innocent human heart, and in them the fulfillment of human nature. (p. 254)

Bluegrass parallels romance again in providing a ritual ordeal for the hero to surmount. To perform properly, the musician must strive for the utmost articulation and power in singing and playing.

It is the aim of the bluegrass style to set forth what the instrument, or for that matter the man playing the instrument, essentially is, and to do so by putting man and instrument to the test. (p. 203)

Bluegrass music is an ordeal designed to challenge and, in challenging, to display the musician's intellectual, imaginative, and moral resources, and to provide a field for the development of those resources. It is a test of character. (p. 205)

It is essential that bluegrass provide this opportunity, for "in human society the ordeal consolidates and affirms the values upon which that society depends" (214). Thus bluegrass is assured status as a worthy inheritor of the great minstrel tradition and as a fullblown American "musical myth" (274).

To establish this visionary understanding of Bill Monroe's music is Cantwell's main purpose, and despite its mystical and gradiose aspects, I find *Bluegrass Breakdown* convincing on this issue. I think the work suffers from being too wholly dedicated to its main theme, however. There is much in bluegrass that Cantwell neglects to discuss or explain, and some elements that he misconstrues.

Even if we grant the debatable point that most bluegrass bands up to 1960 fit his characterizations of Monroe's music and its context, how are we to interpret the many changes wrought by the urban folk music revival since that time? At one point Cantwell equates Monroe's "impulse" in creating bluegrass with the motivation of the urban "folklorist-musician to reproduce... the recorded performances" of the past (148). Taken literally, this would undercut his own argument that Monroe was much more than an

imitator; it also ignores the creativity of many urban musicians who, schooled in traditional bluegrass music, have built on that foundation to fashion their own innovative styles.

Similarly, it is not enough for Cantwell simply to state that bluegrass attracted "folk revivalists...for obvious reasons" (146) and leave it at that. It cannot be taken for granted that the appeal of Monroe's old southern sound was the same for Flatt, Scruggs, the Stanley Brothers, Reno, Smiley, Jimmy Martin, and the Osborne brothers; it is even less clear what was the appeal of these musicians for the city-bred youngsters who took them (more often than Monroe himself) as models during the 1960s. If it is true that Monroe and perhaps the alumni of his band were parodying the Opry's mimicry of black-face minstrelsy, how are we to understand the motives of their city-billy imitators, who were much less familiar with the Opry and the black-face tradition? Do we have still another layer of parody, or a form of identification much like that of the earliest and most dedicated black-face artists whom Cantwell discusses in some detail (257-266).

Cantwell's focus on Monroe has also led him to slight or misrepresent the music of other southern musicians, Monroe's contemporaries. In the fifties, bluegrass was commonly experienced as just one kind of country music by people who lived in its home territory. It was largely among later city-bred musicians and followers (of whom Cantwell is one) that the distinction between bluegrass and other styles of commercial music first became a hot issue. Much of what Cantwell says about Monroe's integration of white and black traditions applies equally to Bob Wills, Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, the Delmore Brothers, and Merle Travis--not to mention later-comes like Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, and Waylon Jennings.

In emphasizing the uniqueness of bluegrass, Cantwell misrepresents country-western music. He describes bluegrass as "restrained and severe" and Nashville music as "irrepressibly ostentatious and vulgar" (205), overlooking the fact that many country-western singers sing in much more restrained styles than Monroe's, and that bluegrass instrumental textures tend to be much more ornate than the disciplined simplicity of, say, Hank Williams's *Drifting Cowboys*.

Cantwell does give serious attention to the singing of George Jones, but characterizes his voice as "dour...undemonstrative...[and] reluctant," and then presumes to say that Jones sings "the way a boy talks when he wants to sound like a man" (207). His discussion here does have its insights, but comes across as an almost gratuitous insult since the paragraph is peripheral to the description of Monroe's singing style.

I need a lot more convincing to accept Cantwell's statement that between bluegrass and country-western:

there is apparently a yawning

moral gulf; but it is only that the bluegrass musician has wholeheartedly, even willfully, embraced his lot, while the country-western musician has taken a kind of Saturday-night holiday from it. (205)

Given the size and composition of the audiences for the respective styles, one could make a good case for a reversed conclusion: that it is the bluegrass musician who resists mundane socioeconomic realities in performing the old southern sound for a following that today derives very largely from new, northern populations; country-western musicians, I suspect, perform more consistently for people from their own industrial-proletarian origins.

But the question of audience populations is a sticky one. Cantwell claims, at one point, that "Monroe's audience constitutes one of the last genuinely rural classes in America," but confesses that "what precisely characterizes this audience...I am at a loss to explain" (20). Not only does this contradict my first quotation from *Bluegrass Breakdown*, but it is unsupported by any hard data. I can't agree that Monroe's fans are even predominantly rural people, though he still has a dedicated following in what remains of backwoods America. The main point is that we need to see some figures on record sales and audience demographics before we accept Cantwell's assertion. There are many who see bluegrass as a product of exile from the country--deriving not from rural life but from a yearning for it, and with its audience made up largely of people who share a romantic nostalgia for country living, whether or not they have ever experienced it.

With no less information to back me up, I contend that Monroe and most bluegrass musicians are profoundly affected by a kind of "gentrification" of their audience. Bluegrass has become a rallying point for thousands of middle-class urbanites, many of whom do not share the British or African historical roots of the music itself. It is this phenomenon that is largely responsible for the bluegrass renaissance of the late 60s and 70s, which gave rise to the bluegrass festival, brought Monroe to the attention of our mass media, and is ultimately the context out of which *Bluegrass Breakdown* has come. This cultural success is one salient factor that makes bluegrass unique among contemporary styles of country music.

In examining the relation of Monroe's music to the country field in the 40s, I also feel Cantwell underestimates the significance of Roy Acuff who, having joined the Opry just a year before Monroe, headed that show's most popular string band and achieved a patriarchal status (and wealth) that still overshadows Monroe's outside bluegrass circles. Can it be coincidental that Monroe, along with Flatt and Scruggs and the Stanley Brothers after him, chose a band name that parallels Roy Acuff and the Smoky Mountain Boys? It can be argued defensibly that it was

Roy Acuff who first pointed the way for the survival of acoustic string-band music on the increasingly star-focused Opry of the 40s.

There are several other arguments of Cantwell's that are less central to his main theme, but which also suffer from a lack of supportive data. I hope I may be excused for mentioning only those that are most interesting to me, given my limited space.

Cantwell's discussion of the guitar in bluegrass (169-170) misses some important factors, among them the distinction between flatpickers and those who use thumb and fingerpicks. The reason that guitarists stay low on the fretboard (not just on the bass strings) derives mainly from the fact that the large-bodied Dreadnought guitar gives its most powerful and unique tones in this range, below that of the banjo, fiddle, and mandolin.

There is also the crucial development of amplification technology. It was not until the early 60s that more than one or two microphones could be found on bluegrass stages, and that PA systems began to provide clean and powerful amplification. Not only did this technology make outdoor performances for huge audiences feasible for the first time, it also affected bluegrass performance patterns. Multiple miking cut down on the fancy footwork necessary for trading off leads and playing duets, and it allowed the guitar to compete in volume with the other instruments for the first time. The first band to take full advantage of this opportunity was The Kentucky Colonels, working out of Los Angeles and featuring the seminal work of guitarist Clarence White. As Cantwell points out, others had recorded and performed bluegrass guitar leads before, but it was the example of White and the full Colonels band that established a new pattern that has been followed by numerous bands since about 1965.

Elsewhere, Cantwell refers to performance as "the one situation which is a reliable measure of...musicianship, and in which the music itself can grow and change" (174). There is basic truth in this, but we need to recall that many, if not most, performance situations are hardly conducive to serious music-making. The majority of bluegrass musicians perform mostly in bars and pizza parlors where they are lucky if they can hear the whole band clearly, even with modern PA gear. In such contexts, the chief function of the band is to provide an entertaining background for the consumption of food and drink, socializing, etc. Most bar bands rely on pat material which does not demand much improvisational subtlety or emotional involvement. It may well be the noisy bar situation which has led some bands to develop the heavy-handed first-beat pulse that Cantwell too casually relates to deep-South racism (110).

Cantwell reveals a strong antipathy for written music in saying, quite inaccurately, that "no back-porch picker ever bothered with"



learning to read tablature or standard notation, and in asking "what...can be the value" of transcribing a traditional tune (177). I can appreciate his concern that the printing of a tune transcription may give unwonted "fixity" to a single version, and tend to create unfair proprietorship for the transcriber (178-179). But Cantwell seems blind to the usefulness of notation as an aid to memory or analysis, and reluctant to credit a literate musician with the ability to use his ears and heart once he has been exposed to written music. I particularly resent his footnoting Peter Wernik in connection with the exaggerated statement that "bluegrass musicians never get rich, though parlor-book authors often do" (182). Conscientious authors and publishers will credit their sources (as Cantwell fails to do in citing song-texts throughout Chapter 10), and they will pay for permission to use copyrighted materials. Furthermore, Wernik is a bluegrass musician--not a rich one. (I cannot forbear from mentioning another citational lapse, where Cantwell quotes the composed gospel song "Fifty Miles of Elbow Room" as an example of the pastoral ideal in folksong lyrics, again without a footnote [245].)

Before I conclude, let me mention some of the many passages in *Bluegrass Breakdown* that I find especially enlightening. Cantwell makes a genuine contribution to our consideration of Monroe's sources in his discussion of Chicago jazz during the 20s, when the three Monroe brothers were living in that area.

What distinguishes the Chicago style is the emergence of the soloist and the individual improvisatory tour de force; the New Orleans style, until the spectacular leadership of Louis Armstrong, had consisted chiefly of a continuous collective improvisation following in the wake of the lead instrument ... (46-47)

Cantwell points out that this development closely parallels the evolution of bluegrass out of 20s-style string bands, under Monroe's leadership in the early 40s--though Monroe was doubtless influenced directly by western swing as well as his youthful memories of Chicago. It is especially interesting to learn that Monroe's 1976 instrumental "Milenberg Joy" is an "accelerated version of the Jelly Roll Morton composition 'Milneburg Joys,' which Louis Armstrong and Morton recorded...in 1923, and which became a popular ballroom standard" (47). Elsewhere, Cantwell reminds us that Morton's piano style paralleled the innovations brought to bluegrass rhythm by Scruggs's banjo playing (105).

In fact, Cantwell's extended discussion (chapter 4) of the nature of rhythm in bluegrass is very evocative, if sometimes hard to follow. I like his distinction between Rock (stress of the backbeat) and Roll (splitting the major beats to create a flowing feeling) as devices for

heightening rhythmic intensity, with Scruggs's banjo roll lengthening the bouncy two-beat string-band meter into a flowing four-beat pattern.

(I must question some of his specifics, however. Cantwell errs in saying that the banjo "does not incorporate" the fundamental rhythm of bluegrass [112]. Most of the major beats are played by the banjo: the rolling effect is created by its stress of the Rock beats--2 and 4--along with well-chosen gaps and eighth-note anticipations. Cantwell also mistakenly cites my "Introduction to Bluegrass" as authority for the statement that "typical" tempos take the banjo to an eleven-note-per-second pace [111]; it is only the very fastest tunes that reach such speeds. --But I must also thank him for his generous characterizations of that article [66-68].)

Another strength of *Bluegrass Breakdown* is in Cantwell's discussion of scales in bluegrass and its antecedents. He may take too seriously the modal terminology of art-musicologists, but his perceptions are nonetheless convincing. He makes an interesting case for the claim that "the bluegrass song...is a kind of minstrel song spiritualized" (125), in that Monroe's material depends heavily on the same "major pentatonic" scales that dominated minstrel tunes, but many bluegrass songs are developed below the tonic note, like the "plagal" modality of traditional black spirituals. I also appreciate his pointing out that the use of the subdominant chord adds a modernized (diatonic) flavor to Monroe's songs, usually reserved for the first line of the chorus. This gives added meaning to the fact that other bluegrass bands use the subdominant much more frequently than Monroe; the supposedly archaic Stanley Brothers sound comes immediately to mind--"The Fields Have Turned Brown," "Little Glass of Wine," etc. But note that the subdominant chord is often sung in harmony as if the tonic were still being played, creating a subdominant with a dissonant major seventh (tonic third) riding over its top.

I also especially recommend Cantwell's descriptions of Monroe's mature singing style (127-142, 208-212) and the way that back-porch pickers use formulas to build improvisations (149-153). I regret not having the space to elaborate on these genuine, and almost unique, contributions to bluegrass musicology. They are especially important in being integrated into a holistic view of a musical style and its cultural context.

Though we may quarrel with Cantwell's choice of titles, it would be wrong to fault him for not writing a definitive scholarly history and description of bluegrass. This task has been left for others, and is likely to be more fully achieved by the appearance of Neil Rosenberg's bluegrass history, soon to be issued by the same publisher.



Cantwell's greatest success lies in identifying a nerve-center of the power of Monroe's music in its intimate expression of American consciousness, particularly in working out the interplay between the Euro- and Afro-American cultures in the South. The special element in bluegrass is its success in integrating these two legacies while invoking the myth of the primal garden as a stage upon which the relation of Americans to each other and to nature could be restructured apart from the decadent civilization of the Old World. Cantwell is telling us a lot about why we feel Bill Monroe's music so deeply.

He is less successful in demonstrating how bluegrass differs, at this level of analysis, from the music of Hank Williams or Jimmie Rodgers, though he shows that the more archaic Appalachian sources of Monroe's music are closer to our pioneer past and less embroiled in the

confusions and ills of industrial urban America. Another contrast lies in Monroe's patriarchal role as the founder of an expanding movement, but Cantwell does not fully explore the significance of this factor, hardly toughing on the musical influence of bluegrass upon other styles and individual careers. This is unfortunate, because it is here that Monroe's contributions will be felt long after his death.

But Cantwell has done enough to keep us challenging and exploring for years to come. Even in the boldness of its rhetoric, as in the depth of its insight, *Bluegrass Breakdown* makes us question the meaning of our responses to this wonderful, powerful music. The book should be read by all who are willing to make such an exploration. It will permanently raise the pace and pitch of discussion about bluegrass.

--Richmond, California

MINSTRELSY AND TRADITION: A REVIEW OF  
*MINSTRELSY AND TUNESMITH* (JEMF LP 109)

by

by Robert Cantwell

(Robert Cantwell teaches English at Kenyon College. His first book, *Bluegrass Breakdown*, was just published by University of Illinois Press. He is currently working on a book on blackface minstrelsy.)

Because sound implies presence, it is one of the peculiar miracles of sound recording that by means of it we bring the past--five minutes ago, five or fifty years ago--into our presence. Herein lies the fascination of old-time music on disc, which was mostly generated during a period when record producers and audiences alike were dedicated to the power of the phonograph to preserve, or actually make to live again, the sounds of the past; music always partakes of its time and can impart its spirit again to listeners in times beyond its own. It is this same fascination, moreover, which may have led the folklorists of a generation ago into remote districts to record folksongs presumed to have survived from the past: for though we no longer confuse the ideas of "traditional" with "archaic" or "folk" with "rustic," it is nevertheless true that human memory, linked to the networks of oral communication which normally tie human communities together and assure their continuity as such, has proved a highly reliable storage-and-retrieval system, never, perhaps, as accurate as a text, nor as impressionable as a sound recording, but ultimately more durable than either one. Once we acknowledge that music, if it is good music, lasts long and travels far, whether it has been recorded or not, in any form--once we acknowledge that, then we can begin to make sense of the role of recording technology in our musical traditions, folk and popular.

Norm Cohen has taken a giant step in this direction with his album *Minstrels and Tunesmiths*, issued by JEMF and supplemented by Cohen's meticulous, comprehensive, and expertly written notes, which are a watershed in our understanding of the folk process, a solid statement with the weight of Cohen's sleuthlike song-scholarship behind it. It is his ability to untangle the history of a song which gives him the confidence to say in *Minstrels and Tunesmiths*, as he did in his book *Long Steel Rail*, "that much of what folk musicologists have agreed to call folk music had its origins in commercial popular music of the period 1860-1920." This plain fact--

which is a fact because song scholars like Cohen have made it so--undermines our long-cherished belief that, as Cohen characterizes it, folk music is "the product and property of simple, uneducated peasants, who, in some ill-defined process created their folk music collectively, passed it on orally, and remained sheltered from the influences of any mass culture around them." Cohen does not trouble himself to refute this idea, because he doesn't need to; his album speaks pretty much for itself. He notes, simply, that "arguments justifying its rejection have been forcibly made in print."

*Minstrels and Tunesmiths* shows that while we must abandon the sentimental notion that folk groups lead entirely isolated lives we can perhaps hold onto the deeper conviction which originally gave rise to that sentiment, one which formed a few hundred years ago with the increasing differentiation of western civilization into a bewildering plurality of social, political, economic, ethnic, and other kinds of human groupings, whose complex interactions generated culturally self-created places, times and peoples insulated, but not isolated, from the mainstream of contemporary life--"folk" cultures which absorbed, transformed, preserved, and often gave back the ideas and images of the civilization around them. The selections on *Minstrels and Tunesmiths* which, by design, exclude the ragtime, blues, and jazz of the period with which all of us are already familiar, suggest the delight of the popular imagination, around the turn of the century, in aural representations of such cultures, however sentimentalized, idealized, or travestied, as indeed they had been in minstrelsy and vaudeville, where most of our ethnic stereotypes grew up. These recordings, made by popular artists between 1902 and 1923 on cylinder and disc, include an Anglo-American fiddle tune, an Irish stage song, several minstrel show routines, a "laughing" song, a cowboy ballad, a sentimental or "parlor" song, a Negro spiritual and three plantation songs, a banjo medley by Vess Ossman, and a play-party

or nonsense song called "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," a traditional song for which the performer, Wendell Hall, like so many professional folk-singers after him, claimed copyright. Thus the mountain fiddler, the working Irishman, the cowboy on the range, the frontiersman, and the rube joined the pantheon of human types created in minstrelsy and on Tin Pan Alley. These efforts, and the music they produced, are of course strictly commercial; but in America, commerce and culture have always been closely intertwined.

Cohen's notes, and the graphics and texts reproduced from original record catalogues and advertisements, as well as the recordings themselves, all illustrate that during this period the phonograph was still the handmaiden of sheet music and the musical stage; it had not yet discovered its own role--which it did do, and decisively, with the emergence of old-time music in the twenties. One is struck, for example, by the concert-hall formality of the singers, their sometimes openly theatrical vocal gestures, the melodramatic or pompous piano and orchestral accompaniments. Given the still-primitive state of the technology, they seem, and must have been for their original buyers, the merest shadows of actual performances, and perhaps offered a kind of aural memento of an evening at the theater. Nor did the singers themselves seem particularly interested in the special properties of recording as such, and its artistic opportunities: the prodigious output of Len Spencer, for example, who made sixty-two thousand records without benefit of the master recording process, suggests that for him the recording device was only a mechanical substitute for an audience, and not a genuine instrument of art. The promotional material accompanying the recordings, however, apparently aware of the immediacy of the sound recording--they were, after all, performances, not scores--emphasized the authenticity of the renditions. "Probably the most authentic collection of genuine American Folk Songs ever collected," crowns a Columbia catalogue of Bentley Ball's "Song-a-logue of America"; "Mr. Ball has traveled over the entire country, collected these songs at their sources..." Of songbird Kitty Cheatham the Victor catalogue says "Miss Cheatham is also well equipped, by birth and personal observation, to sing with authority the genuine old negro songs; her work along these lines is of rare ethnological and cultural value. She was sung to sleep by these songs, and gives them exactly as she heard and sung them always--in their primitive and undeveloped state." The difference between these two claims is interesting--Columbia offers authenticity of text, but Victor of style, which only a record company of course could offer.

Well, are these recordings "authentic," in either sense? Miss Cheatham's medley of Negro songs is a curious melange: the language seems an authentic black dialect, rather than the then-standard minstrel patois; the tonality is Scots, strongly pentatonic--but it happens that black

folk and spiritual singers favored the pentatonic scale, too. Her squeezed vocality and delicate ornamentation suggest southern Irish household or nursery song, but the actual notes she chooses are definitely Afro-American, the notes a blues singer might light on. Well, what have we then? It certainly sounds authentic--but authentic what? It probably is, in fact, precisely what a nursery song sung by a black nurse in Nashville in the 1870s sounded like, standing somewhere between the Irish and Afro-American habits of song.

And what about the Tuskegee Institute's spiritual "I Want To Be Ready"? The somewhat regimented character of their arrangement suggests Europeanization, of course, as Cohen notes; but it probably also reflects the inevitable effects of preparing a spiritual song, normally flexible and even sometimes improvisatory, for repeated performances in concert halls for white audiences: how, one wonders, did the Tuskegee singers sound after the show? We do hear, though, some vocal slides and melisma, both quite formalized, a brief overlapping of melodic lines that at least suggests an antiphonal style, and a definite rhythmicity, if not actual syncopation, in the lyric. These singers are, I think, squarely situated in their own tradition, and the interest of the recording lies as much in what has been left out of their performance as in what has remained; we are reminded how extraordinary was traditional black music for the nineteenth-century ear, and just why it was so--and how thoroughly since then we have been able to embrace it in all its energy and emotional power. Incidentally, the Tuskegee singers's "I Want To Be Ready" has a striking resemblance to Bill Monroe's up-tempo bluegrass version of the song.

Harry Browne's "Hear Dem Bells" is a minstrel song, sung in a stage dialect. But the rhythmicity of Browne's phrasing has a definite Afro-American feeling, while his banjo playing is strongly reminiscent of Uncle Dave Macon, as indeed is his whole performance, though his singing is perhaps more sonorous. Browne's recording sheds considerable light on the identity and the influences which came together to produce such a one as Uncle Dave. Other recordings in the collection raise equally intriguing questions. Cohen has carefully traced the histories of both the popular minstrel song "Bully of the Town" and of Wendell Hall's "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" to black folk tradition. But I'll be hanged if "Bully of the Town," with its semitone turns, its octave leap, and its telescoping melodic structure, is a black folksong; it has none of the melodic characteristics of songs acknowledged to have grown up in black oral tradition, with the possible exception of the strong stresses imparted by the lyric. "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," on the other hand, though executed in a good-humored avuncular style by a singer who with Bentley Ball was the Burl Ives of his day, is an encyclopedia of Afro-American play-party and minstrel song stanzas, and in the printed



text Cohen supplies has absorbed even some stanzas we now associate with traditional blues--with interesting implications, I think, for the history of that form. Finally Hall's homely ukulele, an important factor in the popularity of the recording, has an easy swinging rhythm which nicely animates the already rhythmic contours of the lyric.

*Minstrels and Tunesmiths*, among other virtues, drives home, by example, a single fundamental point: that music which has been scored and performed from a score by a score-oriented singer or musician, however authentic its origins in folk-life, has lost the special freshness, the bouquet, of aurally-transmitted material. But songs which have reached the recording horn, even in 1916, directly from oral tradition not only retain their oral character but revive the aural energy of the tune to impart it again, by ear, to its audiences--hence the extreme importance of, and utter appropriateness to, recorded music in folk tradition.

Finally, Cohen's selections ought to fortify out confidence that continuing aural traditions are reliable and inherently conservative models of the unrecorded and unrecordable folk and popular music of the deep nineteenth century. It is very likely that the religious singing of slaves that so thrilled observers such as Fanny Kemble or Frederick Law Olmstead can be heard in the black churches and on the soul charts of today, and that the squeaking, gulping, rattling fiddle

bands of Surry County record the very sounds that sent hundreds of young men from their middle class homes onto the minstrel stage with burnt cork all over their faces. It is a wonder, perhaps, that we can hear, reproduced on a modern LP, the minstrel routines of Billy Golden and Len Spencer; but it is a wonder that points, like the Big Dipper, to a still greater one, that the aural traditions which so intrigue us, and which are, indeed, the whole reason for *Minstrels and Tunesmiths*, can be at once inconceivably old and breathtakingly new. A prodigious performer like Uncle Dave Macon, who from boyhood was exposed to musical styles that ranged from early minstrelsy to ragtime and jazz, can retain in his repertoire and in his singing and playing styles traces of them all.

For anyone interested in these matters, *Minstrels and Tunesmiths* is indispensable, and it is a pioneering contribution to the study of the relationship among commerce, technology, and folk tradition in our music. It bravely overturns the ideas which have done much to blind us to these relationships, and in so doing restores that broader and healthier outlook which can see all of American culture--which is after all a people's culture--as a seamless web of sounds, colors, and forms.

May we hope that *Minstrels and Tunesmiths* will be the first in a series of such efforts?

--Kenyon College

## BOOK REVIEWS

*CLOSING THE CIRCLE: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ROCK REVOLUTION*, by Herbert I. London (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Inc., 1984), vii + 199 pp., prologue, index. Cloth, \$20.95; paper, \$10.95.

After a brief, unspectacular career as a rock 'n' roll recording artist (1959-61) Herbert I. London found success in the academic world; he is now professor of Social Studies and Dean of the Gallatin Division at New York University. In *Closing the Circle* he has given us a flawed but intriguing scholarly examination of the history of rock music, and rock lyrics in particular, from the early 1950s to the early 1980s, and their changing relationship to American culture as a whole.

Reading this book with the perspective of a rock historian, one is aggravated too often for comfort by misspellings ("Kenny Rodgers" and two others in one sentence on page 167, for example), misdatings, outrageous misconceptions of certain artists' place in history ("Blues singers like Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf were direct descendants of Fats Domino," p. 17) and dubious interpretations of certain song lyrics (in London's view the Skeeter Davis hit "The End of the World" "represented...a fear of apocalypse based on the Cuban missile crisis," pp. 78-9). Clearly, this volume is of little use as a source of specific historical information.

These lapses aside, London does demonstrate a solid *general* grasp of the development of rock, and he has some rather interesting things to say about its continuing evolution:

One of the confusing aspects of analyzing rock is its paradoxical character. Greil Marcus and Robert Christgau are quite right in describing rock music as a force for youthful solidarity. But Herbert Gans is equally correct in asserting the pluralistic tendencies in this form of mass culture. The reason both arguments are accurate is that the former was based on a vision of the late sixties and early seventies and the latter was based on an examination of culture in the middle and late seventies. To analyze rock is to describe its kaleidoscopic perspective--forever changing in shape and color. It is as dynamic as the social forces that nurture it... (pp. 185-86).

London's enthusiasm for rock music as entertainment, and as a generally positive element in our culture, is obvious. Despite his subtitle, though, he is less willing than other writers to give rock music much credit for influencing changes in American society. The most cogent argument in this book is that rock is more a reflection than a determinant of these changes. This is evident, for example, in his discussion of differences in attitudes between lyrics of hit songs from the late 1970s and those from a decade earlier, and even more so in his provocative analysis of rock lyrics of the 1950s. Whereas others have acclaimed the universally revolutionary nature of 1950s rock 'n' roll, London persuasively demonstrates that 1950s lyrics are predominantly characterized by conformity to the mores and values of the Eisenhower years, even when the music that accompanies them is dynamically radical in style and sound.

London illustrates and decorates his text with numerous lyric quotations, in addition to contemporary magazine and newspaper reports and commentaries, and excerpts from interviews with various luminaries (including his own discussions with radio "tipsheet" publisher Kal Rudman, concert promoter Bill Graham, and eminent disc jockey Murray the K). The book is also liberally sprinkled with briefer quotes from a galaxy of literati and social scientists, which are by turns illuminating and distracting. Readers with an historical bent likely will be bemused by London's recurring analogies between the "rock revolution" and the French revolution. One bit of history not to be found here is that of London's own recording career, which is dismissed with a couple of brief anecdotes quoted from a local newspaper.

At its price this slender book is hardly an essential purchase for the general music enthusiast or record collector, but those seriously interested in the sociology of rock will probably find *Closing the Circle* worth opening.

--Barret E. Hansen ("Dr. Demento")  
Sherman Oaks, California

*SCALDED TO DEATH BY THE STEAM*, by Katie Letcher Lyle (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1983).

If, like me, you have enjoyed singing the lyrics which compose this title, you may at first simply delight in their traditional, folksy appropriateness to a collection of train wreck songs and stories. I think I can promise that thirty nightmarish wrecks later you will realize that never again will this line sound the same. Like its title taken seriously, this collection is a heady counterpoint to our nostalgia for the fragile and mighty steam trains, where scalding to death was a terrible, looming possibility. Many of those celebrated in this collection (which is not for the squeamish) died almost unthinkably anguished, hot, slow deaths. Lyle recounts their demise in searing detail, which does not skimp on samples of the various ways people cooked to death--the steaming of the smoker passengers on the B & O Flyer Duquesne who died screaming for water to soothe their burning throats; the red-hot shower endured by engineer George Alley who stuck to his throttle and saved his passengers although his flesh was falling off his body; the roasting of Ben Dewberry's nasal passages and lungs, which then developed pneumonia.

The book is like a scrapbook, packed with fieldwork reports, anecdotes, memoirs, newspaper clippings, maps, job advertisements, travel brochures, portraits, and photographs (including many of topsy-turvy, hanging, plunging, trains). The scrapbook medium pays tribute to Lyle's inventive and scrupulous search through many local sources, personal interviews, cemeteries, disaster sites, and artifacts to explore what underlies the ballads. She talked to journalists, songwriters, folk-singers, railroad workers, and many of their relatives and friends. She leaned heavily on the considerable knowledge of Pick Temple and Paul Schue and on the members of the C & O Historical Society, all of whom get meticulous credit for their contributions to her book.

Because the book is such a personal one, we learn a great deal about how and why Katie Letcher Lyle has pursued what even to her is an almost perverse interest in train wreck songs, which are easy not to like. As she says, their quality is at best uneven, descending from our best-loved ballads ("The Wreck of the Old '97" or "Ben Dewberry's Final Run"), through others which are little known but truly lovely (such as "The Wreck of the 1256"), to others such as "The New Market Wreck" of almost no value at all except for sometimes documenting a particularly interesting crash. ("The New Market Wreck" for example commemorates the dramatic telescoping of two passenger trains in which 60 people died.) Sometimes the songs are appalling--inaccurate, sloppy, melodramatic and obvious. Often the imagery is glaring and straightforward: "The Wreck of the C & O No. 5," for example, ends with this stanza:

Until the brakes are set on time,  
Life's throttle valve shut down,  
Some day he'll pilot in the crew  
That wears the Master's Crown.

With a clear block in to Heaven's gate,  
He'll pull his mighty train,  
And there in God's own roundhouse  
He will register his name.

Other songs seem simply ghoulish, mercenary efforts by smarmy commercial songwriters debasing an already bloodthirsty public. But sometimes they speak to all the glories and fallibilities of the folk process, especially since they are clearly rooted in Appalachia between the 1890s and the 1930s, somewhat unfairly but not altogether inappropriately stacked toward the disasters on the C & O. The songs thus reflect a strong Appalachian tradition of responding through music to the trails and triumphs of industrialization. And because she roots both her own perverse fascination with that of the people who help her explore it and with Appalachian musical, family, and railroad traditions, it is hard not to share Katie Lyle's enthusiasm, and easy to appreciate her imaginative efforts to make these sad tales as interesting and ennobled as it might be possible for them to be.

Lyle's book is like a good train wreck song in its wonderful texture and detail. She knows how to tell a nice, plain story and give it a climax you care about; her version of Billy Richardson's last ride, for example, engages us powerfully in his tragic, foolish death. Train wreck songs tend (or at least pretend) to be scrupulously documentary in recording the wreck's weather, date, and time, railroad and engine number, the name of the deceased along with that of his sweetheart or some other gossip that might make his death more meaningful. So too does Lyle enliven her well-told tales with a keen sense of enriching detail. She tells us, for example, about the canaries at Danville, which emerged excited and chirping from the splintered wreckage of the Old 97, and about the family of seven killed in the New Market Wreck while transporting home a relative just killed in a powder mill explosion. On that same train was a postal inspector who jumped for his life to the safety rod when one train telescoped into the other and emerged unhurt except that a sharp timber nearly tore his trousers off. Train buffs, I think, will appreciate the equal time she gives the wrecks themselves and the care she gives to providing thorough, accurate discussions of such matters as the construction and destruction of tunnels, bridges, braking systems, and various models of locomotives. Less knowledgeable enthusiasts will appreciate the way she makes complex and confusing technical problems accessible.



Beyond chronicling the causes and course of these disasters, Lyle is interested in understanding the song's stark formulas, which start with cheery situations, including a bright, brave engineer painted in gay colors, a spark of romance and a few foreshadowing remarks, then ride relentlessly toward tragedy and despair, tagging on a moral. The exceptions to that formula tend to illuminate it, make it interesting, and offer clues about process. Lyle explores, for example, the possibility that a black songwriter may have composed the song remembering the Hamlet, North Carolina, wreck in which 912 black passengers on an AME Sunday School excursion crashed into a slow-moving freight right in the railyards. One of very few songs to treat carnage on a large scale, this unusual text features a chorus, repetition, gripping visual imagery; it would be the only one we know of black authorship. She is also interested in what it might mean that Ben Dewberry's song stands the formula on its ear with a cheerful tune, bluesy structure, an absent warning, and absolutely no detail.

Finally, she is concerned with the preoccupation with morality and metaphor which seems almost a prerequisite for singing about death and gore. One familiar tag is the warning to wives in "The Wreck of the Old 97" which recurs, for example, in "Billy Richardson's Last Ride," an accident that had to struggle for a moral. Other moral tags might stress the unpredictable fleetingness of life: as in "The Wreck on the Hunnicut Curve"---"Make your peace now with God, don't delay; Let Him strengthen your hand on the throttle, For it may be your last run today." Some of the morals are quite straightforward, as in "There's a many poor man has lost his life by making up lost time" in "Fatal Run"; but "The Wreck of the Royal Palm" offers one which is more obtuse: "We're on the road of life, And like the railroad man, We ought to do our best to make The station if we can. Then let us all take care, And keep our orders straight; For if we get our orders mixed, We sure will be too late." Thus, the songs use the occasion of disaster to warn us of the fragility of human life, the inscrutable whimsy of God and the simple heroism of the prototypical industrial hero, the engineer who was on easy terms with peril, in no small part because he rode with a virtual time bomb of a boiler in his cab.

These songs might well end with moral tags. Lyle argues that they have an ennobling side which is true to the ennobling qualities of the disasters themselves. Her essays convinced me, however, that there was much about these wrecks which speaks to the very worst in all of us. Consider for example the causes of the wrecks: engineers drove too fast, forgot to stop or yield, failed to slow down for curves or started down a curve with a partially depleted air brake system. At Hamlet the dispatcher just forgot that an excursion train was approaching. Roadbeds, bridges, trestles, and tunnels had been shoddily constructed; and, by the time trains could go fast enough to be dangerous, were rotten and deteriorating. The spectacular collapse of the unshored Church Hill Tunnel through its melting, shifting, blue marl or of the Guyandotte Bridge under the weight of heavy new engines it was clearly too frail to hold, just underscored the many less dramatic incidents. The problem of shabby equipment was exacerbated by the treacherous Appalachian terrain which contributed rock-slides, loose ballast, and boulders, such as the one which slid onto the tracks of the Flying Fast Virginian and sent young George Alley to his death under the reverse bar. Slipshod maintenance and impossible schedules, especially for the mail trains, transformed the need for constant vigilance into reckless, breakneck driving. If all this were not enough, young saboteurs caused at least two spectacular disasters by simply placing spikes on the tracks. Most of the engineers we celebrate as heroes in these songs threw away their lives; often the wrecks were their fault; when not, we see a seemingly misplaced identification with a company which made no provisions to keep them safe.

Then comes the public's ghoulish interest. At the New Market Wreck, chickens escaped from a freight car only to be killed, fried around campfires, and even sold to the many spectators who came to see the carnage in what was very much a carnival-like atmosphere. At Ruffin, North Carolina, the Depression-ridden people of 1933 ripped the limbs off pigs and cows stolen from the twenty-seven cars of livestock being pulled on the train. Many of the disaster scenes boasted spectators, vandals, looters, and a ghoulish public.

The only really light and lively side to the stories lay in the interesting problem of what to do once the crash was inevitable. Behaving appropriately seemed to involve a complex weave of grit and imagination in situations where it was rarely entirely clear what was best to do. Songs praise those engineers who stuck by their trains, but often crew members jumped after pulling the whistle and setting the emergency brake, and this seems to be acceptable. The best thing in most instances seems to have been to bring your own roaring, lumbering train to a stop, like the engineer of the Royal Palm or the brave Ben Dewberry. Saving your own skin then demanded some ingenuity, as exemplified by the porter who hid in a hole in the side of the dining car. Those who survived and those who managed to save at least some of their passengers or fellow workers were those who had perhaps made mistakes but under duress found some reservoir of quick wit and simple courage.

The songs and stories may give some readers nightmares; I found many of them difficult to read. They are gory, depressing, and they may make some readers angry. Nonetheless, I think that Lyle has made the collection as interesting and engaging as it is possible for stories of disasters to be.

--Brett Williams  
American University  
Washington, D.C.

*FLYING DRAGONS, FLOWING STREAMS: MUSIC IN THE LIFE OF SAN FRANCISCO'S CHINESE*, by Ronald Riddle (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press); xiv + 234 pp., (Foreword by H. M. Lai), selected bibliography, index, \$29.95, clothcovers.

I would assume that most readers of the *JEMF Quarterly* would probably not make a mad dash to the book store to pick up something as "exotic" as Dr. Riddle's book on the musical life of the Chinese population of San Francisco. I can assure our readership that they are shortchanging themselves.

Riddle calls his effort a "social history." The book "offers a beginning toward understanding the musical culture of America's Chinese, through an examination of the musical life of their oldest and largest community."

Mantle Hood, professor emeritus at UCLA and whose book *The Ethnomusicologist* has been reviewed in these pages, has suggested that currently the term *ethnomusicology* has two broad applications, the second of which being "the study of all varieties of music found in one locale or region, e.g., the 'ethnomusicology' of Tokyo or Los Angeles or Santiago...in other words, all music being used by the people of a given area" (Mantle Hood, *Ethnomusicology*, *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged, Willi Apel, ed. [Cambridge, MA: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969]: 298). Riddle adds, "it is only in recent years that the musics of American urban minority groups have engaged the research attention of ethnomusicologists."

The Chinese population of San Francisco is largely of South China origin and are relatively recent arrivals, having come to these shores with the gold rush of the mid-nineteenth century. "Southern China was ripe for diaspora," Riddle writes. "The urge to emigrate was motivated in large part by social tumult and economic uncertainties in the homeland. The ruling Manchu dynasty had decayed and declined, and by the middle of the nineteenth century had become notably corrupt and unjust in its administration...For thousands of men in the area of the Pearl River Delta, economic dislocations and distress left little choice by to seek work outside of China and to support their families from abroad for extended periods...When news of California's gold discovery reached Canton in 1848, America became a prime destination." Over 500 men left Hong Kong in 1850 and by the end of the following year, it was estimated that there were 25,000 Chinese in California and by 1890 the population peaked at 107,488. "From 1882, when the First Exclusion Law was passed, until Exclusion Repeal in 1943 [over 60 years!] immigration from China was negligible. But from the 1940s to the present day, new waves of immigration have re-infused the American Chinese communities with first-generation Chinese.

These immigrants were almost exclusively male and virtually all intended to return to China. "As general laborers, carpenters, and cooks, the Chinese were highly valued. Their willingness to do domestic chores and other jobs scorned by the white man carried much favor in a society lacking women and an established laboring class."

By the 1870s, with the completion of the transcontinental railroad coupled with the petering out of the mining resources, the Chinese became the scapegoat. "Now vilified for his alien demeanor and dress, his 'paganism,' and a variety of fantasized immoral, unsanitary, and treacherous ways, the hard-working Chinese became essentially a victim of his virtues. The very attributes of industriousness, frugality, and self-restraint that had been admired by the welcomers of the 1850s became a collective thorn in the side of the white unemployed."

Yet despite discrimination, the earthquake and fire of 1906 and other assorted catastrophes brought about by man and nature (not necessarily working in tandem), the Chinese have survived and prospered, for the most part, essentially in the same fifteen-square-block area of San Francisco, a city within a city.

Riddle's book is in two parts, following a foreword by H.M. Lai, a Preface and an Introduction. Part I deals with the Nineteenth Century and subdivides as (1) Chinese Theater: The Early Years (1852-1869); (2) Chinese Theater: Years of Prosperity (1870-1889); (3) Chinese Theater: Decline and Disaster (1890-1906); and (4) Other Uses of Music in the Nineteenth Century.

Part II, The Twentieth Century, has the following headings: (5) Chinese Theater: Regrowth and Survival (1907-1945); (6) Chinese Theater: The Postwar Years; (7) Other Uses of Music in the Twentieth Century; and, finally, (8) Music Clubs and Performing Ensembles. A Summary and Conclusion, Selected Bibliography, and Index conclude the volume.

In part because the Chinese viewed their stay in America as temporary coupled with the rather myopic view of most European-Americans toward the Chinese, this Asian immigrant group remained somewhat insulated and thus virtually no western influences crept into the musical theater of the Chinese. The result was a thriving musical community centered around Cantonese opera, finally shifting focus to the amateur clubs and performing groups in the latter part of the twentieth century.

The editor's note makes the observation that "Riddle's work is an adroitly fashioned blend of



historical research and fieldwork. He allows the reader to see a musical world that, like the community of which it is a part, is undergoing rapid changes which threaten its form and persistence." While agreeing with series editor Ann M. Pescatello, I would add that Riddle has a comfortable writing style, scholarly but accessible. Anyone interested in a broader view of the music life of the West should make it a point to read this fascinating book.

--Philip Sonnichsen  
 Ambiente Music Productions, Inc.  
 Los Angeles, California

*THE DAY THE WORLD TURNED BLUE: A BIOGRAPHY OF GENE VINCENT*, by Britt Hagarty (Vancouver, Canada: Talonbooks, 1983); 262 pp. Illustrated. \$8.95, paperback.

The deaths of several rock artists have been treated as significant news events. Elvis Presley's untimely passing in 1977 shocked an entire generation of rock 'n' roll fans; John Lennon's assassination in 1980 chilled millions of Beatles fans; and the premature deaths of Buddy Holly (1959), Sam Cooke (1964), Janis Joplin (1970), Jimi Hendrix (1970), Jim Morrison (1971), Jim Croce (1973), Keith Moon (1978), and Harry Chapin (1981) created great sadness among music lovers. From this perspective it is strange that Gene Vincent's death on October 12, 1971 prompted so little press attention and such minimal public response. Ironically, over a decade later, his 1950s Capitol recordings are more available than ever before and his image as a distinctive rock 'n' roll talent thrives. Gene Vincent seems to have achieved Pete Townshend's goal of dying before he got old. He has also secured a measure of musical immortality since his performances are now being lionized and preserved for the ears of future rock generations.

Britt Hagarty, a writer and musician who currently lives in Vancouver, has carefully chronicled the personal history of Vincent Eugene Craddock (1935-1971) in *The Day the World Turned Blue*. Although Hagarty is thoroughly conversant with five previous biographies--Rob Finnis and Bob Dunham's *Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps* (1972), Alan Vince's *I Remember Gene Vincent* (1977), Serge Schlawick's *Gene Vincent Story* (1978), Alan Clark's *The Gene Vincent Souvenir Album* (1980), and Jacky Cheland's *Gene Vincent: European Tour* (n.d.), he is committed to using new personal interviews, extensive historical newspaper and magazine quotations, previously unpublished photographs, and his own lyric analysis and interpretation to conjure a more complete image of the man labeled "The Wild One," "The Screaming End," and "The Black Leather Rebel." He accomplishes his goal.

*The Day the World Turned Blue* details day-by-day events in the life of a touring rock 'n' roll performer. The initial success of "Be-Bob-A-Lula" in 1956 propelled Gene Vincent into the public spotlight; however, the failure to sustain either tune-charting success or public adulation created tensions within his personality that eventually shattered several marriages, severely strained and terminated numerous friendships, and eventually killed the artist. From 1956 through 1971 Gene Vincent traveled in the fast lane. His mind and body exulted in the exhibition of rock 'n' roll. Hagarty repeats again and again that Gene Vincent was absolutely faithful to the rockin' beat, despite the fact that other performers abandoned the pure fifties sound for sixties pop pablum. Consistency in song selection, vitality in performing style, and unpredictability and rebellious behavior were the hallmarks of Gene Vincent.

This chronologically structured study examines various elements of Gene Vincent's life--his short-lived U.S. Navy career, his brutally crushed and never-quite-mended left leg, his halcyon years with Capitol Records, his failing marriages, his lack of skilled financial management, his inability to maintain consistent support groups, and so on. This book is not the vindictive tirade of an axe-wielding journalist, though. It is an attempt by a perceptive Vincent fan to delve into the personality of a man troubled by unequal bouts of paranoia, jealousy, depression (particularly over the 1960 death of his close friend Eddie Cochran), alcoholism, egotism, and physical infirmity. When Gene Vincent's ulcer finally burst, the 36-year-old performer was literally at the end of his professional, financial, and psychological rope. Hagarty writes a tragedy. Superb talent continues to reveal itself on concert stages throughout Vincent's career despite continuing onslaughts triggered by all kinds of character flaws. Speculative questions abound. What if Gene Vincent's career

had been guided by Col. Tom Parker or some other well-organized business manager? What if Gene Vincent had allowed his tortured leg to be amputated in 1955 and replaced by a well-designed prosthesis? What if one of his wives had been strong enough to control his penchant for alcohol?

This is a fine book. In many ways it is reminiscent of Nick Tosches's biography of Jerry Lee Lewis; but unlike the central character in *Hellfire* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1982), the



protagonist in Hagarty's text is not haunted by fundamentalist religious myths. The agony of lingering physical pain and long-term alcohol abuse lead to anguish, anger, and frustration. Hagarty's linchpin for assigning the "legendary" label to Gene Vincent is musical purity. The Canadian writer declares at the start of his book, Vincent "...was one of the originators of the progression from blues and country to rockabilly to pure rock 'n' roll, and never strayed from his chosen path. He never went country and western like Jerry Lee Lewis, never went pop like Elvis Presley, and never turned to gospel like Little Richard. Gene lived fast, died young, and never stopped rockin'" (p. 9). This study, which concludes with an excellent Discography (pp. 253-259), is a thorough examination of Vincent's fifteen-year struggle for stardom.

--B. Lee Cooper  
Newberry College

*BLUES LYRIC POETRY: AN ANTHOLOGY*, by Michael Taft (New York: Garland, 1983). xxvii + 379 pp., 9" x 12", clothcovers, \$75.00.

*BLUES LYRIC POETRY: A CONCORDANCE*, by Michael Taft (New York: Garland, 1984). 3 vols., xxxi + 3150 pp., 9" x 12", clothcovers.

Although these companion publications will be most fruitful if both are available to the user, each--the anthology in particular--can be used by itself. Sensibly, they are sold as separate works, which means that at least a few interested individuals will be able to afford the Anthology, if not the multi-volume Concordance. The latter may not even find many home in public or institutional libraries.

The Anthology is a compendium of lyrics to "over 2,000" blues songs, all taken from LP reissues of commercial recordings originally made between 1920 and 1942. Over 350 singers are represented, from 200 LP albums.

For each item, artist, title, place and date of recording, and record master and release (and LP reissue) numbers are given. There then follows a condensed text in which the essential unit is the stanzaic couplet, stripped of vocal and spoken elaboration and with minor textual variations suppressed. The anthology is thus not a precise textual transcription, but provides enough details to identify the content of any stanza and find and identify uses of the similar stanzas in different songs. The texts are arranged alphabetically by artist, and chronologically by recording date within each singer's entries. The main listing is followed by a 55-page Concordance Index of Titles, in which principal words in any title are identified and the songs in which they appear cited. The author's preface discusses in more detail the nature of the blues, the problems in transcription, and the methodology used in compiling the present volume.

There is no question that this volume will be an immensely useful research tool for anyone working with pre-War blues commercial recordings, or with later materials that may derive from recordings of that period. The only criticism that could be leveled at the work is, Why the present limitations? Why only 200 LP albums? On what basis were they selected? They are certainly not the most accessible LPs, since they include English, German, Italian, French, and Australian reissues, as well as long-out-of-print American ones.

Taft discusses the question of criteria for inclusion more fully in the Preface to the Concordance. His operational definition of "blues" is "a secular song composed of rhyming couplets in which one or both lines of the couplet may be repeated one or more times and in which the couplet itself might be embellished with refrains" (p. xi). Further on, he states the problems of relying on LP reissues of 78-rpm originals. So doing means that the user/reader is more likely to be able to find the recordings; on the other hand, Taft recognizes that LP reissues are not entirely representative of the 78-rpm recorded blues corpus. Therefore, he made special efforts to find albums that included less-known singers. The final size of the compendia was a compromise between the desire to include enough to make it truly representative and not so much as to make the handling of it--the Concordance especially--excessively cumbersome.

There are questions of textual fidelity that will need to be examined in detail by future studies. For example, in Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Peach Orchard Mama," where Taft has the transcribed the last couplet as "Becuase when I gets mad/I acts just like a clown," Eric Sackheim, in *The Blues Line: A Collection of Blues Lyrics* (1969) has "Because when I gets mad.I/acts just like I sound." In Jefferson's "Tin Cup Blues," where Taft has (first stanza) "I was down and I cried/my pillowcase was on the line," Sackheim has "I was down and I cried/my suitcase was down the line." In Barbeque Bob's "She's Gone Blues," Sackheim has, for the first stanza, "Nobody bought you your medicine/I still brought you bread" but Taft has, "Know bobby brought you your medicine/also brought you bread." And so on. This brief sampling is not offered in the spirit of praising one author at the expense of the other; blues transcription is an arduous task, and each transcriber can or should learn from his predecessors. Where one listener hears a hopeless jumble, another can decipher a text effortlessly. And each reading is subject to modification by the next careful scrutinizer.

Turning to the Concordance itself, one is first of all impressed by its sheer size. By their nature, concordances tend to be voluminous works. A concordance is an alphabetical arrangement of words contained in a body of texts with citations of the passages in which they occur. The earliest concordances were of the Bible, motivated by the conviction that the several parts of the Bible have some inner consistency with one another, owing to their being divinely revealed. The first concordance is believed to have been that of Anthony of Padua, who compiled one for the Vulgate in the early 13th century. Many other Biblical concordances have been compiled of which Cruden's (1737 and later editions) and Young's (1884 and later editions) are among the most familiar today. There are also concordances to the works of particular authors and poets, such as Shakespeare and Browning.

Compilers of the above works put many years of their lives into their concordances. Today, the task is somewhat less labor intensive with the availability of computers to do all the mechanical sorting. Taft's concordance was compiled with the assistance of the Center for Computer Research in the Humanities and the Computing Center at the University of Colorado in Boulder, as well as the computer centers at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the University of Saskatchewan. According to Taft (I have not verified the numbers), there are over 235,000 words in the entire corpus of texts. Interestingly, there are only 6,058 different words in this same corpus. This indicates a much more repetitive vocabulary than, say, in the vocabulary of a non-folk poet (George Meredith's complete works contain some 188,000 words total, but nearly 18,000 different words).

The format is similar to many other concordances, except that the computer-generated text aligns the key word within its contextual phrase for easier scanning, as the example below shows. The initial first number that follows identifies the selection within that artist's repertoire that was catalogued in the Anthology and Concordance, and the second number indicates the line within that selection identifying the citation.

TOY (1)			
Wills 5	8	that shoe polish is really children's play-toy/Now moonshine will make you go home:lay down across your bed	
TOYS (2)			
Wills 17	3	Claus:I want you to bring my baby a lot of toys/Now I know my baby wants to have fun:now with these other	
Wills 22	8	to bring no *help*and none of these ??? *toys*/Well I waved my hand:Red shook her head/Well I'm sick and	
TRACK (36)			
JanJ 2	30	that/You got another daddy:on the same damn track	
JackJ 6	9	woman:make a freight train jump the track/And a black-headed girl:will make a preacher ball the	
DaviW 19	7	fastest race horse:that ever run around a track/And if you let me get in your saddle mama:I may ride the	
Byrd 2	15	to have my fun/Old Mrs went to the race track:and lost all her mon'	
Clal 1	8	do like Jesse James/Go out on some railroad track:and rob your daddy a passenger train	
Crud 1	9	never broke her gait/She going to the race track at midnight:and I rode her all night long/Yeah when	
Whea 29	5	to the station:gazing down the railroad track/Because them double-crossing woman left me:ooo well well	
MooH 1	6	My daddy's engine running:on my *double track*/Black hearse ain't no use:you sure can't have my man/I'm	

Taft has opted not to exclude from his concordance even the trivial conjunctions and prepositions, on the grounds that "by browsing through those parts of the concordance which analyze these less substantive words, one often finds especially interesting linguistic patterns and congruencies..." (p. xxi). I would worry that Taft's streamlined presentation might distort such subtle patterns, some fruitful research based on these compilations of "less substantive" words. (Omitting the most trivial, namely "a," "and," "but," "in," "it," "no," "of," "on," "that," "the," and "to" would have eliminated more than half of one of the three volumes.)

The concordance itself is followed by a Ranking Frequency List, in which every word in the corpus of texts is listed in order of frequency. The most frequently used word is "I," which occurs 9,875 times. The twenty most frequently used words ("I," "you," "to," "the," "my," "and," "me," "a," "in," "I'm," "your," "going," "now," "got," "don't," "that," "on," "she," "no," and "baby," in that order) account for over one-third of all the words in the corpus. What is the significance of such word frequency lists? What, if anything, do they tell us about blues lyrics? Or, more to the point, about the culture that they represent? Unfortunately, even assuming that Taft's method of streamlining his texts does not skew any of the statistics, one can say little in response to the above questions without comparable figures for other bodies of American English prose or poetry.

Then, we can begin to learn how blues lyrics simply reflect properties of the American language in general and how they are different. The twenty most frequently used words in American English (as determined by Henry Kucera and W. Nelson Francis in their *Computational Analysis of Present-Day American English* [1967]) are, in order, "the," "of," "and," "to," "a," "in," "that," "is," "was," "he," "for," "it," "with," "as," "his," "on," "be," "at," "by," and "I." For a sampling based only on popular lore the order is slightly different: the most noticeable changes are that "I" drops to 36th place and "from" comes up from 26th to 20th place.

By itself, neither list tells us much, except that on a word-for-word basis our language is composed mostly of connective words--conjunctions, prepositions, and articles. But the prominence of "I," "my," "me," and "I'm" in blues lyrics reflect the dominant autobiographical nature of blues texts. These four words account for 9.5% of the words in blues texts, but less than 0.4% of popular literature in general. Similarly, the frequent use of "you" and "your" in blues (4.6% compared to less than 0.1% in general popular lore) show the importance of direct interpersonal relationships in blues.

The ranking of gender pronouns reveals another interesting characteristic. In all of American English, "he" and "his" occur tenth and fifteenth respectively, while "she" and "her" are 37th and 35th. In blues, "he" and "his" are 49th and 109th, while "she" and "her" are 18th and 45th. Can we say that sexist bias, if not absent, is very different in the blues world?

For a further insight to the subject matter of blues, we can look at the most common nouns. These are, in order, "baby," "man," "mama," "woman," "time," "blues," "night," "day," "morning," "mind," "women," "door," "town," "money," "daddy," "train," "girl," "babe," "head," and "hand." In the general list, they are "time," "man," "years," "people," "state" [?], "world," "men," "work," "life," "day," "year," "house," "place," "school," "number," "war," "fact," "water," "hand," and "head." (These lists immediately point out another problem in deriving any useful information from word frequency lists: all homonyms and homographs are indistinguishable. Is "state" a verb or noun? We can't separate them.) There are interesting differences between the two lists, but they must be analyzed carefully. Probably "baby," "mama," "daddy," and "babe" (and maybe other words) are used primarily as words of address, rather than indicating subject matter directly. Time is an important subject in both lists: "time," "night," "day," and "morning" in the blues list; "time," "years," "day," "year" in the general list. The differences are suggestive. "Door" in the blues list is probably idiomatic for "house" in the general list. "Mind" and "blues" reflect the expressionist nature of blues poetry, in contrast to the factual daily concerns of the general sample--"world," "people," "war," "fact," "water." Where the general sampling stresses "work," blues stresses "money." And so on. A host of ideas suggest themselves from a casual perusal of such word lists.

The Ranking Frequency List is followed by an index of singers and songs, which gives, for each entry in the concordance, the title, place and date of recording, and master and release numbers.

I have already acknowledged the immensity of this undertaking. I have conceded that it is inconsistent to complain on the one hand of its arbitrary limitations and on the other of its possibly unnecessary bulk. In the last analysis, however, the concordance--and to some extent, the anthology--is but a tool; its real evaluation will have to wait to see to what uses future scholars put it.

--Norm Cohen

*FOLK VISIONS AND VOICES: TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND SONG IN NORTH GEORGIA.* Field collecting, text, drawings and paintings by Art Rosenbaum, photographs by Margo Newmark Rosenbaum. Musical transcriptions by Bela Foltin, Jr., foreword by Pete Seeger. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983). xv + 240 pp., photos. Illustrations, index, bibliography, discography; clothcovers, \$27.50.

When the first wave of great American folksong field collections was published in the 1920s, there was a fairly consistent format that was used regularly. Primary attention was to the texts, with extensive headnotes tracing the song back to whatever earlier variants had been collected on either side of the Atlantic. Less attention was given to the tune, and still less to the singing style. Instrumental accompaniment was virtually ignored, and instrumental music per se, even more so. Meticulous collectors reported their informants' names and date and location of collecting; and if possible the informant's source for his/her song, primarily in the spirit of establishing the documentable age of the variant under question. Introductory material gave broad backgrounds on the history and culture of the region, but in vain would readers search for fuller portraits of the singers and their individual lives. This was consistent with the generally prevailing point of view



that regarded the singer of a song as merely a passive bearer of an ancient folk tradition; the better a folksinger he/she was, the more faithful a bearer: i.e., the song was transmitted much as-- if not more than--on the song itself and its depersonalized history.

*Folk Visions and Voices* is a stunning book that demonstrates the newer approach to folksong at its most successful. In as many dimensions as the printed page will allow, Art and Margo Rosenbaum have presented an excerpt of rural life of North Georgia, a region that has been rich in musical culture--consider the many outstanding hillbilly musicians of the 1920s and thirties from that region--but, surprisingly, has never been the subject of a booklength field collection.

The book consists mainly of seventy-eight songs collected by Rosenbaum between 1978 and 1983, grouped by informant, rather than by song style, ballads vs. lyrics, white vs. black, etc. Each chapter, devoted to an individual or group of informants, opens with a warm biographical sketch. Such verbal descriptions are wonderfully enhanced with the excellently reproduced black and white photographs by Margo Rosenbaum and by twenty or so magnificent sketches and paintings (including four in color ) by Art Rosenbaum. Brief song headnotes are not meant to be exhaustive but are sufficient for any interested reader to find his way to the pertinent printed and recorded literature. In addition to the songs, which include ballads, lyrics, pop-songs, worksongs, blues, spirituals and gospel songs, banjo tunes and instrumentals, there are also lengthy autobiographical narratives, sermons, and tales and reminiscences of local history and tradition. End matter includes, in addition to an index of titles and first lines of songs and a bibliography, a useful discography of music and musicians from North Georgia that includes over fifty albums with brief annotations.

Few books on folk music that have been published in recent years can be recommended more highly than this one.

--Norm Cohen

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| 30. "Robert W. Gordon and the Second Wreck of 'Old 97,'" by Norm Cohen  |  |
| 32. "Southern American Folk Fiddle Styles," by Linda Burman-Hall  |  |
| 33. "The Folk Banjo: A Documentary History," by Dena J. Epstein   |  |
| 34. "Single-Industry Firm to Conglomerate Synergistics: Alternative<br>Strategies for Selling Insurance and Country Music," a study<br>of the impact of National Life and Accident Insurance Co. on<br>the Grand Ole Opry, by Richard A. Peterson |  |







# JEMF QUARTERLY

## CONTENTS

VOL. 20

SPRING/SUMMER 1984

NO. 73

The American Cowboy: A Note on the Development of a Musical Image, by Sam D. Ratcliffe	2
A Preliminary Index of Country Music Artists and Songs in Commercial Motion Pictures (1928-1953), Part 4, by Willie Smyth	8
<u>Graphics #65</u> : Signifying Banjos, by Archie Green	19
<u>Record Review Essay</u> : Robert Cantwell's <i>Bluegrass Breakdown: The Making of the Old Southern Sound</i> , by Mayne Smith	33
<u>Record Review Essay</u> : Minstrelsy and Tradition: A Review of <i>Minstrels and Tunesmiths</i> (JEMF LP 109), by Robert Cantwell	39
<u>Book Reviews</u> : <i>Closing the Circle: A Cultural History of the Rock Revolution</i> , by Herbert I. London (Barret E. Hansen--"Dr. Demento"); <i>Scalded to Death by the Steam</i> , by Katie Letcher Lyle (Brett Williams); <i>Flying Dragons, Flowing Streams: Music in the Life of San Francisco's Chinese</i> , by Ronald Riddle (Philip Sonnichsen); <i>The Day the World Turned Blue: A Biography of Gene Vincent</i> , by Britt Hagarty (B. Lee Cooper); <i>Blues Lyric Poetry: A Concordance and Blues Lyric Poetry: An Anthology</i> , by Michael Taft (Norm Cohen); <i>Folk Visions and Voices: Traditional Music and Song in North Georgia</i> , by Art Rosenbaum (Norm Cohen)	42
JEMF Publications	51

\* \* \* \* \*

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# JEMF QUARTERLY

Volume XX

Fall/Winter 1984  
(Double Issue)

Number 74

---

## CONTENTS

Editorial ..... 56

### SPECIAL SECTION: THE FIRST ANNUAL COUNTRY MUSIC CONFERENCE

#### Introduction

James E. Akenson and Frank Childrey ..... 57

#### The Development of Western Swing

Cary Ginell ..... 58

#### Five Pre-World II Arkansas String Bands: Some Thoughts on Their Recording Success

W.K. McNeil ..... 68

#### The Economics of Hillbilly Radio: A Preliminary Investigation of the "P.I." System in the Depression Decade and Afterward

Ivan M. Tribe ..... 76

#### Lewis Crook: Learning and Living Country Music

James E. Akenson ..... 84

#### Graphics #66: Bascom Lamar Lunsford's First Album

Archie Green ..... 94

#### "Just Let Me Hear Some of That...": Discographies of Fifty Classic Rock Era Performers

B. Lee Cooper ..... 100

### RECORD REVIEWS

*Virginia Traditions: Virginia Work Songs; Eight-Hand Sets & Holy Steps: Traditional Black Music of North Carolina; Birmingham Boys; Yonder Come Day; Note Singing and Spirituals from South Carolina; Drop on Down in Florida: Recent Field Recordings of Afro-American Traditional Music; Florida Folk Festival: The First 25 Years (1953-1977)*

(Norm Cohen) ..... 117

#### Records Briefly Noted

(Norm Cohen) ..... 120

### BOOK REVIEWS

Louis M. "Grandpa" Jones, with Charles K. Wolfe, *Everybody's Grandpa: Fifty Years Behind the Mike*

(Loyal Jones) ..... 122

Willie Smyth, *Country Music Recorded Prior to 1943: A Discography of LP Reissues*

(Tony Russell) ..... 123

William R. Daniels, comp., *The American 45 and 78 RPM Record Dating Guide, 1940-1959*

(Norm Cohen) ..... 126

Ted Fagan and William R. Moran, comps., *The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings: Pre-Matrix Series*

(Norm Cohen) ..... 127

#### Bibliographic Notes

(Norm Cohen) ..... 128

---

## EDITORIAL

Observant JEMFQ readers will have noticed that the issue they are now reading was mailed to them from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, rather than from the usual University of California at Los Angeles address. They have doubtless also noticed the unusual disparity between the cover date and the mailing date -- and, correspondingly, the long delay between JEMFQ issues in the past year. To all of these observations they are entitled to an explanation.

After the transfer of the JEMF collection to the University of North Carolina it became apparent that the difficulties of publishing the JEMF Quarterly without the archive or any institutional support would soon become insurmountable. At about the same time, the establishment of a new Center for Popular Music at MTSU was announced, and former JEMF advisor and employee Paul F. Wells was chosen as Director of the new Center.

Following a lengthy meeting between JEMF directors and officers of the Center for Popular Music, it was agreed that the JEMF Quarterly would be transferred to the Center, eventually to become an organ of that institution. Additionally, Paul Wells agreed to undertake the publication of the final issues of JEMFQ in its present format. Hence, this, and the final volume of issues will be produced at MTSU and mailed to readers from there, but will be edited by Norm Cohen and Paul Wells. Following that, Wells will take over as editor-in-chief.

The present issue concludes Volume 20. In an effort to put the publication schedule back in sync with the calendar, Volume 21 will carry a combined 1985/86 cover date. At that point, the JEMFQ will become the journal of the Center for Popular Music. Eventually, the contents of the new journal will begin to reflect the somewhat different charter of its parent organization, but initially, the changes from JEMFQ of recent years, with its broad coverage of folk, country, blues, ethnic, and pop musics, will be slight. However, changes in format -- better quality paper, computerized typography, altered size, etc. -- will be more apparent to readers. All current subscriptions will automatically be converted to subscriptions to the new journal for readers' convenience.

Editorials in the next issues will keep readers apprised of these changes as they are inaugurated.

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# SPECIAL SECTION: THE FIRST ANNUAL COUNTRY MUSIC CONFERENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

James E. Akenson and Frank Childrey

On May 25-26, 1984, the first annual Country Music Conference provided scholars with an opportunity to present papers and discuss their research efforts and interests. Held in conjunction with the Jimmie Rodgers Memorial Festival in Meridian, Mississippi, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi and Tennessee Technological University, and supported (in 1984) by the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities, the Country Music Conference will be held each year on Friday and Saturday of the last full week in May. Thus, the second annual Country Music Conference was held on May 24-25, 1985, and the third annual conference will take place on May 30-31, 1986.

A wide range of papers reflected the high quality and broad scope of research interests which conference co-chairmen James Akenson and Frank Childrey feel will characterize each subsequent conference. Topics ranged from Cary Ginell's analysis of Western Swing to Charles Wolfe's evidence of Emmett Miller's influence on Jimmie Rodgers and other country musicians. Ivan Tribe played fascinating excerpts of early hillbilly radio "per inquiry" (PI) techniques. William McNeil discussed five 1928 Arkansas string bands. Stephen Tucker canvassed rockabilly music and played taped examples by several performers. James E. Akenson chronicled the life of Lewis Crook of the Grand Ole Opry.

The first annual Country Music Conference offered a very special meeting for those interested in varied aspects of inquiry into traditional, contemporary, pre-commercial, and commercial country music. The papers that follow reflect an excellence that James Akenson and Frank Childrey believe will make the Country Music Conference a significant component for the intellectual life of country music scholars.

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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN SWING

Cary Ginell

*Cary Ginell received his M. A. in Folklore and Mythology at UCLA. His master's thesis on the early years of Decca Records will be published by Bear Family in 1986 as the first comprehensive hillbilly discography. Ginell has taught the history of country music at UCLA and has also produced and annotated 15 LP's of western swing reissues. Future projects include a biography of Milton Brown, which is already well underway.*

Dance all night, dance 'til the rooster crows,  
To the music of a red hot string band . . .

So sang Bill Boyd in his 1936 recording of "When They Played Rural Rhythm." This very well could have been the theme song of Texas and Oklahoma in the 1930s as the infectious, inviting music that came to be known as "western swing" spread like wildfire through the dusty hamlets and big cities of the Southwest during the miserable years of the Depression.

In fact, the term Boyd used: "rural rhythm," probably would have been a better monicker for the music than "western swing" since musically "swing" was still several years away from changing from a verb to a noun, thanks to Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, and others.

In the beginning, there was no term for the genre other than simply "dance music," and the organizations that played it were known as either "string bands" or "fiddle bands."

Whatever the name, the music itself had its beginning in the late 1920s when the need for dance music had grown to epidemic proportions in the Southwest. Jazz was still an adolescent and the rich mixture of sounds emanating from the clubs and radio stations in New Orleans and, to a lesser extent, Chicago and Kansas City, were invading Texas and Oklahoma.

In American popular music, the pattern has been such that a musical revolution is often accompanied by a similarly revolutionary dance craze. Witness, for example, the Charleston, Swing, Rock and Roll, the Twist and its '60s relatives, disco, and currently, breakdancing. The late 1920s saw an expansion of country dancing extending beyond the usual square dances and waltzes to dances accompanying ragtime and jazz. Thus, the two-step, fox trot, and round dancing came to the Southwest.

Two young musicians who excelled in performing for dances were Bob Wills and Herman Arnspiger. The two began playing country dances in Northeast-

ern Texas in the late 1920s. Fiddler Bob Wills came from a long line of accomplished breakdown fiddlers and was heavily influenced by the music of the black field workers who picked cotton on farms in the Texas Panhandle. Guitarist Arnspiger's accompaniment emphasized the off-beat, or the second and fourth accents of a measure of music. Arnspiger's rhythm, combined with the fiddle of Wills resulted in an early step to the transformation of traditional fiddle music to a vibrant, new form of dance music.

The maturation process of western swing in the early 1930s can be divided into four stages, the first two being covered in this paper. The first stage was the initial state of string band music in Texas in the late 1920s, identified by bands such as Hugh Roden's Texas Nighthawks, Smith's Garage Fiddle Band, and the original High Fliers. Stage two began with the formation of Milton Brown's Musical Brownies in September 1932.

There is a half-step in between the first two stages which includes what I consider "missing link" bands: bands that had the feel, or certain individual elements necessary in western swing, but too primitive, or too closely associated with Stage One to be considered a Stage Two group. The two major bands of this hazy but important half-step were the East Texas Serenaders and the Southern Melody Boys.

The East Texas Serenaders was a group of musicians from the east Texas town of Lindale that played mostly house dances for private parties. The Serenaders included in their repertoire not only the usual array of breakdowns and waltzes, but also an assortment of rags and stomps. Although the Serenaders was one of the first Texas groups to play jazz-oriented tunes, their style, as evidenced by their records for Columbia, Brunswick, and Decca, was still more associated with the Stage One string bands, which utilized little or no jazz improvisation, substituting instead the usual variations on melodies, which were often duplicated from performance to performance. In addition, none of the musicians of the major fiddle bands



of the mid-30s whom I interviewed acknowledged the existence of the East Texas Serenaders, much less their influence.

The Southern Melody Boys of Fort Worth emerge as the primary "missing link" string band, a band that spawned key members of future Stage Two groups. Organized in 1930, the Southern Melody Boys featured four musicians on twin fiddles, guitar and banjo. The fiddle men were Cecil Brower and Kenneth Pitts, two youngsters who were both tutored by one Wylbert Brown, a classical violinist and instructor who had been performing for social events in Fort Worth since at least the mid-1920s. Brower and Pitts used their classical training to effect a smoother sound to the Melody Boys' music, and their knowledge of musical harmony gave them more understanding and freedom to experiment with some of the tunes that the group played on their regular radio program on Fort Worth's KFJZ.

Sometime in 1932, Cecil Brower began introducing jazz tunes into the Melody Boys' repertoire. Kenneth Pitts, the only surviving member of the band, clearly recalls playing tunes such as "Tiger Rag" and "Sweet Georgia Brown," attempting "take-offs" or improvisatory phrases and embellishments in the arrangements. Cecil Brower's playing attracted the attention of Milton Brown, singer with the Light Crust Doughboys, and when Brown left in September to form his own band, he hired Brower to help tutor his other fiddler, Jesse Ashlock. Pitts would later become a stalwart of a future generation of Light Crust Doughboys and teaches violin in Fort Worth to this day. Unfortunately, the KFJZ Southern Melody Boys never made phonograph records and there exists no audio example of their performances on Fort Worth radio. [Note: A vocal group bearing the same name did record for Bluebird. However there is no relation between the two groups.]

Milton Brown was already a veteran of various vocal groups of the late 1920s when he joined Bob Wills and Herman Arnspiger as their vocalist in 1930. In January 1931, the three became the Light Crust Doughboys, because Burrus Mill and Elevator Company of Fort Worth, makers of Light Crust Flour agreed to sponsor the group, which was soon joined by Milton's younger brother Durwood. With the inauguration of the Light Crust Doughboys, Fort Worth officially became the focus of western swing development.

In February 1932, the Doughboys recorded two songs for the Victor label in Dallas. The two selections ("Nancy Jane" and "Sunbonnet Sue," both written by Milton Brown) indicated the first change in western swing, moving steadily from Stage One to Stage Two. The improvisational element that

became a necessary element of western swing (as it was in jazz) had not yet surfaced; however the rhythm of Durwood Brown's guitar and the sophistication of Milton Brown's vocal proved that western swing was indeed on its way.

The Light Crust Doughboys became a popular attraction at dance halls such as the Crystal Springs Ballroom, located on White Settlement Road just outside of Fort Worth. A ramshackle hangout at best, Crystal Springs was also a favorite watering hole for the nefarious of the Depression. Gangsters, hoodlums, bank robbers, and assorted lawless individuals became well known to the Doughboys, and later, Brown's Brownies. Fred "Papa" Calhoun, pianist for Milton Brown, is fond of relating countless tales of the exploits of various incorrigibles including Raymond Hamilton, Bonnie and Clyde, and Blackie Lawson.

In time, the Light Crust Doughboys moved to the more powerful WBAP in Fort Worth, and with Burrus Mill general manager W. Lee O'Daniel becoming their announcer, the sounds of the Doughboys were soon booming from the transmitters of the stations of the Texas Quality Network (WKY-Oklahoma City, KPRC-Houston, WOAI-San Antonio, WBAP-Fort Worth). String bands began to pop up in these cities and the surrounding areas, even extending to KWKH-Shreveport, where Leon Chappelear's Lone Star Cowboys became Louisiana's representative in western swing's development.

W. Lee O'Daniel's megalomania triggered the departure of its seminal members in 1932 and 1933. In addition to his bucolic readings of poetry and his homespun philosophies (which later propelled him to the Texas governor's seat), O'Daniel's fear of being upstaged led to his habit of giving his musicians colorful nicknames to avoid giving them proper credit on broadcasts. Milton Brown was "The Boy with The Golden Voice;" his replacement Leon Huff became "The Texas Songbird." When O'Daniel left to form his own band, the nicknames continued out of habit and soon, "Snub," "Junior," "Bashful," "Abner," and "Knocky" became familiar names to Texas audiences.

When O'Daniel banned the Doughboys from playing dances at Crystal Springs, where the band-members would often earn many times their salary for O'Daniel on the radio, Milton Brown bolted and in September of 1932 formed Milton Brown and the Musical Brownies. Less than a year later, Bob Wills also left and set up his own band in Waco. Wills' replacement in the Doughboys was Kentuckian Clifford Gross, who joined the band in time for their first out-of-state recording session in Chicago in October 1933. This session (for Brunswick, with records released on Vocalion) featured instrumentals

## A GALLERY OF EARLY WESTERN SWING BANDS

(All photos courtesy of Cary Ginell.)

### *Fiddle Band in Round-Up Program Saturday*



**THE WANDERERS.**

The Wanderers' Fiddle Band will be heard on the Saturday night round-up program over Station WFAA at 10 p.m. They will also be on the air at 11 a. m. They are from left to right, Holly Horton, Dick Reinhart, Jack Norwood, Fred Casare, Bert Dodson, Roy Dodson and John Dodson.

*The Wanderers*



*The Southern Melody Boys*



*The Light Crust Doughboys*



... Season's Greetings ...

from  
Milton Brown and the  
Musical Brownies



MILTON BROWN  
AND HIS BROWNIES  
CRYSTAL SPRINGS  
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

SAM CUNNINGHAM  
MANAGER

PHOTO BY BILL

If you would Dance away your troubles;  
Live and Laugh as ne'er before,  
See us at Crystal Springs...more often,  
Throughout Nineteen-Thirty-Four.

Henry Cummings

1934






'MILTON BROWN & HIS BROWNIES'

Milton Brown and his Brownies



*Bill Boyd & the Cowboy Ramblers*



*W. Lee O'Daniel and group*



and sentimental pop ballads, which O'Daniel always preferred to the jazz tunes that Milton Brown favored. Once on his own, Milton Brown raided the stock of records at Will Ed Kemble's furniture store in Fort Worth, pulling jazz performances to adapt to his string band.

The second stage of western swing's development began on the day late in 1932 when Milton Brown hired pianist Fred Calhoun to join his organization. The hiring of Calhoun, the first pianist to play in a Texas string band capped off Milton Brown's initial innovations in organizing his group and established a sound which was emulated by every string band that followed. While Bob Wills was struggling in Waco with his ragged new group in 1933, Milton Brown was cleaning up in Fort Worth, attracting hundreds of dancers six nights a week.

Milton Brown's original group included fiddler Jesse Ashlock, banjoist Ocie Stockard, bass man Wanna Coffman, guitarist Durwood Brown, and Milton, who acted as emcee, vocalist, and band manager/booking agent. Shortly afterward, Cecil Brower joined, leaving the Southern Melody Boys in a state of disarray from which they never recovered. Without their leader and chief innovator, the Melody Boys never stood a chance against the Brownies and soon dispersed.

Cecil Brower tutored Jesse Ashlock in the art of take-off solos and soon Jesse became one of the best in the business, becoming a long-standing member of Bob Wills' Texas Playboys into the 1950s. Banjoist Ocie Stockard contributed the solid 4-4 rhythm of dixieland bands and was coveted by Bob Wills for many years after. Wanna Coffman was instructed by Milton Brown to slap his bass fiddle instead of plucking or bowing it, in order to further the insistent rhythm required in hot jazz tunes. Brother Durwood Brown's rhythm guitar playing was so heavy that a parade of assistants (including the youngest Brown brother, Roy Lee) was employed simply to stand by and change strings for Durwood when one snapped.

With the addition of pianist Fred "Papa" Calhoun late in 1932, the second stage of western swing's development officially began. Calhoun was a jazz musician from the very start, playing first drums and then piano in various Kansas City jazz bands during the 1920s. Now running a quaint World War II vintage grocery store in Fort Worth, Calhoun still plays piano (and vibraphone) at informal gatherings and social events. Calhoun's nickname came from an early affinity for the playing of jazz great Earl "Fatha" Hines. He remembered vividly his first night as a Musical Brownie:

When I went out to Crystal Springs, I didn't even know where it was. I never had been there. And there was a group from Chicago playing at the station: the Three Jacks (and) they were playing on stations at that time. They asked me to be a guest artist on their program with them. Then after that, why they wanted to go out to Crystal Springs and hear Milton Brown; he had just started up out there, they said he had a good band. I said, "That's a string band, isn't it?" They said, "Yeah." I said, "Well I don't play in string bands or fiddle bands, I play with horn bands." They said, "Well they got good rhythm, you'd fit right in, why don't you go and sit in with them?" So they finally talked me into it. I remember it was a real cold night . . . snow on the ground. We drove out there and they had a big crowd . . . it was on Thursday night. So ol' Milton started dustin' off the keys. I knew then I was gonna have to play. He announced that the colonel from Kentucky was gonna come up and play, that's what they called me on the radio. So I sat in and we played . . . I believe it was "Nobody's Sweetheart." Got a big kick out of it. Then we played "Tiger Rag" for a Paul Jones. Paul Jones is the name of a dance, where they all circle. They played "Tiger Rag" and Milton said; "Take a chorus, Mister Calhoun!" I took a chorus on it . . . I used a lot of show stuff, hitting a lot of fast licks with both hands. We got through with that tune and the whole crowd quit dancing and ganged around the bandstand (laughs). I asked Milton "What happened?" He said "They come up here to watch you play the piano!" (laughs) "I thought they had had a fire or something!"

Twenty-five miles away in Dallas, the Musical Brownies' chief rivals were enjoying similar popularity. The Wanderers were formed in 1931 by WRR staff guitarist Roy Newman. The Wanderers developed in the same fashion as the Musical Brownies by adding a hot fiddler, Alfredo Caceres from Mexico. Caceres was a cousin to jazz violinist Emilio Caceres and later moved to Memphis where he became "Jose Cortes" of the Swift Jewel Cowboys.

Dick Reinhart was the singer and lead guitarist with the Wanderers. Reinhart's guitar playing was heavily influenced by the blind street singer

Blind Lemon Jefferson and it was Reinhart who first brought blues vocals to western swing bands.

Banjoist Marvin Montgomery joined the Wanderers in 1935, after spending years playing with various tent shows. Montgomery's dixieland banjo would eventually become a primary addition to the Light Crust Doughboys, with whom he is still a member.

Clarinetist Holly Horton became the first wind instrumentalist to record with a western swing band. His antics on the clarinet (heard more frequently on Roy Newman's Vocalion recordings) became a crowd draw at the Wanderers' many dances.

The Wanderers attended only one brief recording session, in San Antonio on 28 January 1935. Marvin Montgomery remembered the session:

Eli Oberstein was A & R man with Victor and I remember one song, "Nealski," was named after Neal Helvey who was on one of those tent shows I was on. Oberstein wanted me to sign the publishing over to him and I wouldn't do it. He said, "OK, I'll never record another song of yours." He never did, as that was the only session I ever worked with him on!

Back in those days there was a thing that they don't have now--it's a business now, then it was a fun thing. We'd go in and record as many tunes as we could think of in one session; 20 or 30 tunes. Anyhow, they said, "Don't stop, whatever you do. We'll let you know if you make a mistake that is so bad we can't issue it." And that's the reason on these old records you'll hear mistakes, they didn't want to spoil one of those acetates!

Late in 1934, Milton Brown introduced an amplified instrument to western music for the first time. Bob Dunn's crude-looking contraption was merely a magnetic pick-up attached to his Martin guitar, which he played Hawaiian-style on his lap. Dunn also played the trombone and because of this influence, his guitar playing sounded anything other than Hawaiian. Dunn attacked his instrument like a wild animal and the swoops and swipes coming from his steel guitar often froze dancers in their tracks. His fellow musicians were equally astonished and Wanna Coffman, who played Hawaiian tunes before Dunn's arrival late in 1934, heard Dunn play steel and never picked up a steel guitar again.

Within a year's time, all the string bands in Texas wanted an amplified guitar. One of these groups was the Hi-Flyers, a band that had been kicking around Fort Worth since 1929, mainly as a first stage string band. Milton Brown's banjoist Ocie Stockard was an original member of the "High Fliers" (original spelling) and recalled that until they heard Milton Brown play, the High Fliers played only waltzes and occasional breakdowns. But in 1933, the Fliers turned hot, dispensing with breakdown fiddler Clifford Gross (who joined the Light Crust Doughboys, replacing Bob Wills) in favor of swing fiddler Pat Trotter. Eventually, the High Fliers changed their spelling and added the Bob Dunn-inspired steel guitarist Billy Briggs, who lays claim to the honor of being the first person to put legs on a steel guitar and play standing up. (Eastern steel guitarists such as Cliff Carlisle played steel with a strap around the neck, but Briggs removed the body of the instrument, retaining the neck and the amplifier and cord, extending flamingo-like legs to the ground. Briggs' invention became the prototype for the modern-day steel guitar.)

Up in Tulsa, Bob Wills' steel guitarist Leon McAuliffe was so impressed with the sound Bob Dunn was getting with Milton Brown's band that he asked Wills to purchase an amplifier for him. McAuliffe used the amplified guitar at Wills' first session in September 1935. That same week, Roy Newman supplied his lead guitarist, Jim Boyd, with an amplifier. Newman's band shared personnel with Bill Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers and Jim, Bill's younger brother was a standout musician in his own right. Boyd's amplified guitar on Newman's "Hot Dog Stomp," recorded that week predates all other efforts on the electric (standard) guitar, including recordings by Charlie Christian, Django Reinhardt, Eddie Durham, Les Paul, and the many guitarists that were to follow. Boyd remembered making the recording session and still has that guitar.

I bought that guitar . . . it's a little mahogany Martin guitar and the Vol-U-Tone amplifier was brand new at that time. Roy took the money out of the proceeds of the band and bought an amplifier and a pick-up. He asked me to play the amplified guitar, but I never had seen one before. Of course, I felt honored to play the electric guitar so I went down and paid \$35 for that guitar. (holds up guitar) This round sound hole was the only type of a guitar that the Vol-U-Tone pick-up fit on. It had a little clamp that went under the strings and clamped underneath the top of the guitar in the sound hole. So, you can see on the guitar where

it's kind of boogered up here where that pick-up went across? It fit right under there. As well as I remember it, it didn't have a volume control on it. I think the volume control was on the amplifier. And people would come in and hear that thing and they'd go to lookin' . . . and they didn't know what it was. No one had ever heard an amplified guitar before. Bob Dunn played a similar guitar to this one. To my knowledge, it's the first electric guitar that was ever played in Dallas.

In the fall of 1935, Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys made their first recordings for Brunswick. It had taken him two years, but Wills finally built himself a reputation in Oklahoma, utilizing Tulsa's KVOO as a home base. With Wills' session, the second stage of western swing's development was complete. This second stage began with the instrumental innovations of Milton Brown, which included the introductions of hot fiddles, piano, crooning vocals, slapping bass fiddles, and the amplified steel guitar. Bob Wills' innovations were also revolutionary (experimenting with saxophones, trumpets, trombones and drums) but they never caught on. Originally, Wills patterned his band after the Musical Brownies and eventually added horn sections. Although musically inferior to many of the other bands of the mid-30's, Bob Wills' superior showmanship carried the Texas Playboys through those first rough years, and by 1937, Wills had honed his group to become Milton Brown's successor as the premier band in the Southwest.

In August 1934, a new record company was formed by a former Brunswick records salesman named Jack Kapp. Kapp wished to exploit the new music coming from the Southwest and sell it to the public for a lower price than Victor and Columbia were charging. So Kapp left Brunswick and with the help of Sir Edward Lewis, founder of English Decca, formed American Decca. His first artists included Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, and Guy Lombardo. With an advance reputation for musical excellence insured, Kapp dispatched his brother Dave to the Southwest to bring the popular hillbilly acts north to record. One of the first bands Kapp went after was Milton Brown's Musical Brownies. In 1936, Dave Kapp held the first of what was to be many field recording sessions in the Southwest, setting up shop at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans. Milton Brown attended his second and final session for Decca in March 1936 when he added fiddler Cliff Bruner to his band. Bruner was to later lead Texas's most famous string band of the late '30s and learned much about managing a band from his mentor Milton Brown.

On 13 April 1936, Milton Brown apparently fell asleep at the wheel of his brand new sedan and crashed on the Jacksboro Highway outside of Fort Worth. His female companion was killed instantly but Brown was rushed to the hospital in serious condition. Expected to pull through, Brown developed pneumonia and on 18 April he died. Texas's most popular string band was decimated. Some 3500 mourners filed by the casket with thousands more waiting for blocks outside the funeral home to catch a last glimpse of the foremost innovator of western swing. With Milton Brown's death, the Musical Brownies splintered and the surviving members joined up with various organizations led by Ocie Stockard, Durwood Brown, Cliff Bruner, and Roy Newman. At the time of his death, Milton Brown was considering a move to Houston as well as possible production of short subjects. He was also negotiating with entrepreneur Billy Rose to be featured in the Texas Centennial celebration of July 1936. Milton Brown was only 32 years old when he died, at the pinnacle of his popularity and with no telling to what heights he might have climbed had he lived.

With Brown gone, the Southwest turned to Tulsa's Bob Wills, the only other bandleader with the charisma to rival Brown. It was only at this point that Bob Wills' success took off.

Fred Calhoun, the popular "Papa" of the Musical Brownies, was the first in a long line of outstanding swing pianists that played in bands in Texas and Oklahoma. Others included Al Stricklin, Moon Mullican, Jack Henson, Roy Newman, George Bell, and Landon Beaver. But probably the most admired was John W. "Knocky" Parker.

Knocky Parker was born in the small town of Palmer, Texas--about 30 miles southeast of Dallas. As a small boy in the late 1920's, Knocky found himself drawn to the piano playing of jazz greats Joe Sullivan and James P. Johnson. Parker would introduce the blues to pianists in the string bands of Texas and became a popular member of the Light Crust Doughboys in 1937. Knocky Parker:

Somehow, it got to be known that out there at the Parker farm there was this kid who played blues tunes. And any black musician who could play would come out there and get some money and a meal and he'd come in and play for me too. Generally, these were pianists who would play maybe one tune. But nevertheless there was a great deal of talent out there, and the



one tune they could play they really could play! And I learned these tunes from them and this was a tremendous influence, they were amazing! Daddy would go to Dallas to get cotton pickers and we'd go up to the Lone Star Saloon . . . In the early 20's money was easy and you had to get the workers in that season, as many as you'd need. And I'd go up to the piano and play a little bit, I know I met Blind Lemon that way. And of course, he was unusual, he came up to me and felt my face and my fingers and laughed and then he would play something and I'd play exactly the same thing. He had a formidable technique nobody else had. Other people would play skiffle instruments: homemade and pieced-up instruments, juxtaposing two instruments together, creating something new and fresh and unusual. They played kazoos and combs and everything and were tremendous, oh, very good musicians! Jugs even, with intonation you wouldn't believe. And I would try to play with them and play what they played.

Thus far I have established that the first stage of western swing's development was the string band sound of the late '20s. Milton Brown and Bob Wills' innovations in instrumentation in the mid-'30s marked the second stage. In the late '30s, the third stage was completed with structured arrangements being introduced for the first time by Kenneth Pitts and Buck Buchanan of the Light Crust Doughboys and Eldon Shamblin and Alex Brashear of Bob Wills' Texas Playboys. The fourth stage of pre-war western swing arrived when traditional jazz tunes were replaced by more and more original compositions.

Western swing could not have existed, however, without the Depression. The controlled environment created by the economic difficulties of the 1930s affected transportation, access to the outside world, living conditions, and cultural needs. The desire to escape the hardships by innovation and creativity in music only could have occurred at that time and in that place.

The primitive state of radio broadcasting enabled fiddle and string bands to spring up in every city in Texas, each band progressing in the same direction as did Milton Brown's Musical Brownies, a group which found its way into every home by either the radio, the phonograph, or in person.

In the 1940s, World War II caused the migration of people from the Southwest to other parts of

the country. Consequently, their music went with them, to the big cities on the East Coast, and the seaboard on the West Coast. Most of the pre-war Texas fiddle bands were broken apart by the draft, but a few, such as Bill Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers and Bob Wills' Texas Playboys continued on. Wills himself brought western swing to California where a totally different branch of the music grew.

But it was the formative years; those days in which struggling musicians followed their hearts and their instincts into primitive radio stations and makeshift recording studios to begin the creation of one of the more remarkable musical forms of the 20th century.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Written studies on western swing have been sparse and grossly underrepresented in the various histories of country and western music. Many studies that have been published have been negligent in their ignorance of facts, duplication of faulty statements, and omission of substantiation by the people who saw the genre develop.

Much of the information I have gathered came from the musicians themselves. In addition, I spent many days hunting down musicians, perusing scrapbooks, squinting at faded newsclippings, and going through dizzying reels of microfilm, hoping to find that one elusive clue. Substantiation and corroboration came slowly but steadily. The major misconception I hope to see corrected is the recognition of Bob Wills as the first and foremost creator of western swing. In my research I have found this not to be the case. Without taking away any credit due to Wills, I am positive in asserting that although Wills was an early component of the maturation process of western swing and essential in its popularization, Milton Brown was the guiding force which set the stage for the success of Wills and everyone else who followed. Every musician I interviewed agrees with this fact, members of Wills' band as well as members of other organizations. This article hopefully will begin to shed new light on the importance of Milton Brown as the driving force in the early stages of western swing until his death in 1936. Any further substantiation or questions regarding western swing during the 1930's are encouraged and welcomed.

Listed below are the various musicians and persons who I have interviewed from 1977 to 1985. A (d) before the name indicates the person is now deceased. (V) indicates the interview is on videotape, while (A) indicates the interview is on audio tape.

Julian Akins  
 Mrs. Joe Shelton (Mary Attlesey)  
 Sheldon Bennett  
 Doug Bine  
 Jim Boyd (A)  
 Bonnie Brantner  
 (d) Billy Briggs (A)  
 J. B. Brinkley (V)  
 Roy Lee Brown (V)  
 (d) Alex Brashear (A)  
 Cliff Bruner (V) (A)  
 Fred Calhoun (V) (A)  
 Murry "Zeke" Campbell (V)  
 Alfredo Caceres (A)  
 Wanda Coffman (V) (A)  
 Mrs. Buster Coward  
 William "Smokey" Dacus (A)  
 Jimmie Davis (A)  
 Eddie Dean (A)  
 Horace Edmondson  
 (d) Buster Ferguson  
 Joe Frank Ferguson (A)  
 Tillman Franks  
 Johnny Gimble  
 Artice Glenn  
 Grundy "Slim" Harbert (V)  
 Harold Hensley (A)  
 Joe Holley (A)  
 Carroll Hubbard (V)  
 (d) Harley Huggins (A)  
 Darrell Jones (V) (A)  
 (d) Dave Kapp (transcribed interview)  
 Johathan Kapp

Pee Wee King (A)  
 Walker Kirkes (V)  
 (d) Darrell Kirkpatrick (V) (A)  
 O. W. Mayo (A)  
 Leon McAuliffe (A)  
 Laura Lee McBride (A)  
 J. Fred McCord  
 "Red River Dave" McEnery (A)  
 Jimmie Meek (A)  
 Patsy Montana (V) (A)  
 Marvin "Smokey" Montgomery (V) (A)  
 Mrs. Roy (Rowena) Newman  
 Howard Oliver  
 John "Knocky" Parker (A) (V)  
 Les Paul (A)  
 Hank Penny (V) (A)  
 (d) Wilson "Lefty" Perkins (A)  
 J. Bruce "Roscoe" Pierce (V) (A)  
 Kenneth Pitts (V)  
 Buddy Ray (A)  
 Jimmie Revard (transcribed) (A)  
 "Uncle" Art Satherley (A)  
 Redd Stewart (A)  
 Ocie Stockard (V) (A)  
 Al Stricklin (A)  
 (d) Gene Sullivan  
 Jimmy Thomason (A)  
 "Sock" Underwood (A)  
 J. Eldon Whalin (V) (A)  
 Mrs. Zeke (Jo Ann) Williams (A)  
 (d) Johnnie Lee Wills (A)  
 Luke Wills  
 Jimmy Wyble (A)

My interest in pursuing a scholarly, intensive study on western swing could not have come about without the influential works of my colleagues in folklore and country music scholarship. Their articles, liner notes to albums, and personal corre-

spondence and discussions proved invaluable in pioneering research in this field. I am indebted to them for stimulating my curiosity and encouraging my work. Their names are listed below.

Don Brown  
 Norm Cohen  
 Eugene Earle  
 Bill Givens  
 Douglas Green  
 Bob Healy  
 Fred Hoeptner  
 Ed Kahn

Bill Malone  
 Donald Lee Nelson  
 Bob Pinson  
 Tony Russell  
 Chris Strachwitz  
 Charles Townsend  
 D. K. Wilgus  
 Charles Wolfe

# FIVE PRE-WORLD WAR II ARKANSAS STRING BANDS: SOME THOUGHTS ON THEIR RECORDING SUCCESS

W.K. McNeil

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Most writers dealing with the history of early country music have emphasized Appalachian and Texas musicians and dealt very little with those from other areas. Certainly no state that produced any sizeable number of significant artists has been more underrepresented in publications than Arkansas. While it is frequently remarked that some of the best country music recorded before World War II came from the Ozarks of northern Arkansas, that situation can hardly be ascertained from articles and essays on country music. For example, in his discussion of country music pioneers, Norm Cohen lists as significant figures only two non-Appalachian performers. One of these is Carl Sprague, a Texas singer, and the other is Eck Robertson, a native of Arkansas who moved away at the age of three and is rightfully also considered a Texas artist.

To some extent, this treatment results from an overemphasis on the importance of the commercial recording industry and a lack of attention to other indicators of popularity. Most of the recordings issued during the years 1923-1932 were by Appalachian based performers and, consequently, most of the widely known artists with, of course, such notable exceptions as Jimmie Rodgers, were from the same region; even he made his initial recordings in Appalachia. Because relatively little recording was done in Arkansas, few musicians from the state produced any "national hits." Among the first to do so were Elton Britt and Patsy Montana, but their recording fame was realized in the late 1930s or early 1940s. Yet, in 1928, only five years after the commercial country music recording industry started, Arkansas musicians were making 78s. Nevertheless, prior to World War II, few of these artists produced a best-selling record; only a handful of the releases seem to have sold much outside of the state and most are extremely rare collector's items today.

What accounts for this general failure of Arkansas performers to capture a wide audience? Some authorities have suggested that it is because they had a more archaic style than their counterparts from other areas. This explanation is especially popular with those primarily interested in the first ten years of commercial country music. Thus, Dave Freeman, on the liner notes of his three volume set, *Echoes of the Ozarks*, opines "Perhaps because they played a 'purer' strain of music—basically free

from the pop, jazz, and vaudeville influences that affected rural musicians of other areas--the musicians on these albums never produced any 'national hits.'"<sup>3</sup> Freeman thought he was dealing only with Ozark performers but several of those he included were from other parts of Arkansas, even from other states. That mistake can be attributed to the general state of knowledge about Ozark and Arkansas country music in 1970 when the set was originally released. But, what about the interesting suggestion that these artists failed to gain a large audience because they were too stylistically regional? Is it really true that they were provincial, that they were somehow isolated from the influences that were factors in the development of rural musicians in other areas? To help answer that question it is necessary to examine the backgrounds and careers of specific artists. For present purposes, five string bands that recorded in 1928 will be considered.

One of the most popular Arkansas string bands recorded in the 1920s came from the town of Searcy, about fifty miles from Little Rock. Known as Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers, the group was named after John D. Pope and his son, Milton, the owners of Pope's Piano and Music Store in Searcy. Milton found out the Victor Talking Machine Company was on the lookout for local talent and wrote the company in Camden, New Jersey, telling them about a band of White County musicians that had been entertaining area audiences for several years. The group had no name but consisted of John Chism, a fiddler, his son, Wallace, a guitarist, and Lee Finis Cameron McKinney, a guitarist, mandolinist, pianist, organist, and singer, better known as "Tip." He acquired his nickname as a child from a neighbor. As he explains, "An old preacher by the name of Wardell named me. . . . When I was a little boy I'd go out to play, you know in the yard. Well, one place out there was a little sandy place and, I'd pick that sand up with my hands . . . and pour it out, that was fun to me. My mother wouldn't let me go out there without a hat on, so every spring I got a new straw hat."

"Now, old Bill Duncan ran a store about three quarters of a mile from the house and this preacher Wardell, he lived back west from where we lived. Well, the preacher always came by our house on his way to Duncan's store, and I'd be out there playing



and I'd tip my hat to him as he passed by. Then the preacher got to calling me Tip and then, after that, everybody got to calling me Tip."<sup>4</sup>

The McKinney family was a large one, consisting of six boys and four girls, and they were all musically inclined, performing together frequently at local functions during Tip's youth. From his father, Guy, young Tip learned many songs, including such Child ballads as "The Gypsy Laddie" but also many popular songs like "The Girl That Wore A Waterfall," "Maple On the Hill," "Sweet Bunch of Daisies," and religious songs like "There's a Great Day Coming," and "Down at the Cross." At a very young age Tip acquired a reputation as an entertainer, one who specialized in comic numbers. "I used to know a lot of these comical songs and 'talkin' off' pieces way back yonder when I was a boy growing up. They'd get me out on a stump somewhere and I'd have a whole big bunch of them out there and, boy, I'm talkin' about they'd just die laughin'. They plenty enjoyed themselves, you know, because I'd really entertain 'em. Even the old folks would get out and listen at me. I was very gifted that way."

It wasn't long before Tip became proficient on several instruments including the piano, organ, mandolin, and guitar. In his teens he began playing in various local bands. One of the first such groups he performed with was a family band headed by fiddler Jim Manous that also included Manous' sister, two sons, and a daughter. Tip recalls this man as one of the best fiddlers he ever heard, remarking that, "He could play 'Leather Britches' and put four parts to it. Now there wasn't another person around here that could do that." McKinney's stay with this group was shortlived, for the fiddler died in 1915. Not long after this Tip started playing with John Chism's band which, for several years, had featured Tip's brother, J. W. "Joe", as banjoist. Such aggregations were very fluid and usually included a different roster almost everytime they played, so too much importance should not be attached to the statement that any particular person was a member. About all that such attributions mean is that a person sometimes performed as a part of the band.

The group that came to be known as Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers shifted in personnel between three and five musicians, often consisting of just the two Chisms and the two McKinneys. The most common fifth member was guitarist John Sparrow. They were frequently hired by local department stores where they could earn \$25-\$30 each for an afternoon's work, good money by 1920's standards. More comonly, though, they played in dance halls around White County. Their repertoire was indeed varied, ranging from fiddle tunes to ballads Tip had from his family, to popular songs of the day,

to numbers of their own composition. Such broad ranging material was necessary if they were to appeal to a wide audience, which, of course, was their intention.

Then, late in 1927, the business of John D. Pope and Son began to have difficulties and, aware that record companies would pay persons who recommended country recording artists, Pope saw this as a means of alleviating debts. He solicited the names of potential musicians from various people and shortly came up with the names of the Reaves Brothers and the McKinney Brothers, among others. Then he contacted Tip and Joe about auditioning for the talent scout and, early in 1928, the group performed for him the fiddle tune, "Cotton-Eyed Joe."<sup>5</sup> This audition led to a chance to record in Memphis and the McKinneys, the Chisms, and Sparrow practiced for a week on the numbers they would record. For their first selection they decided to do "George Washington," a minstrel song re-written by Tip McKinney. Their other numbers were mostly renditions of traditional fiddle tunes and included "Cotton-Eyed Joe," "Get Along Home Miss Cindy," "Birmingham," "Hog Eye," and "Jaw Bone." All of these were agreed on collectively by the band members who were less enthusiastic about two comic sermons featuring Tip talking while John H. Chism accompanied him on the fiddle. Given the generic title, Arkansas Stump Speech, one was subtitled "Marry A Widow" and the other "Bring Me a Load of Corn in the Fall." Apparently, The Victor Record Company also had misgivings about these sides for they were never released.

Of all the Arkansas string bands recorded in the 1920s, Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers possibly produced the best selling records, their 78s enjoying good sales throughout the South. Yet they had only one recording session. According to Tip McKinney, Milton Pope prevented them from making more records. Some of the band members, who received only a flat fee for their efforts, suspected Pope, who received all royalties from the record sales, of getting rich at their expense. Therefore, they asked a Searcy banker to tell them just what financial gain Pope was getting from the sales, an action that led Pope to drop the band and send another group to Chicago for a further recording session. The Mountaineers shortly broke up for good and the McKinney brothers played mostly in their own family band after the Memphis recording date.

When Pope dropped the Arkansas Mountaineers he immediately went to another group of local musicians that he called Reaves White County Ramblers. This was a band consisting of the Reaves brothers, Isaac "Ike," Ira, and Lloyd, three of the nine children of William Pinckney Reaves, a Searcy doctor, and Virginia Drain Reaves. Their father was a fiddler

and their mother an excellent singer who enjoyed doing Christian Harmony songs. Ira Reaves recalls that she, "... could sing so pretty, it would make your hair rise." Nevertheless, of the three boys, only Lloyd, the youngest, ever attempted singing in public. He liked to pitch his songs high and especially enjoyed doing tunes in the flat keys.

While all three brothers loved music, "Ike" is the one primarily responsible for them performing as a band. He was fond of the older fiddle tunes, especially those played in cross tuning but, owing to a sawmill accident, his style of fiddling was somewhat unusual. One finger was almost cut off and, as a result, was crooked and unuseable for fingering. Thus, he had to do his noting with two fingers instead of three. Despite this injury he was still able to play very well for Ira recalls that, "He really played the fiddle good," an assessment borne out by the recordings that survive. Many of his favorite numbers were done in the cross-key "A" tuning, a style that, at one time was very popular in Arkansas and elsewhere but is now pretty much a thing of the past.

When the Reaves Brothers played locally, they featured "Ike" on fiddle, Ira also on fiddle or guitar, and Lloyd on guitar, piano, or organ. While they played together regularly, it is inaccurate to describe them as a band. Ira Reaves explains, "Actually you couldn't call it a group. We played with different groups, with this group now and then and then another. We didn't have no regular group until we went up there and made a record. We wasn't a group."

Sometime shortly after the session with Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers, Milton Pope got in touch with the Reaves Brothers and came to listen to them play. He then made arrangements for them to go to Chicago for a recording session. For a week or so "Ike," Ira, Lloyd, and a guitarist from Judsonia, a town about ten miles from Searcy, named Fred Rumble practiced in Pope's Music Store. Although most members wanted to play some current popular songs, the sort of material favored by Ira, apparently brothers Ike and Lloyd, who preferred older material, prevailed. Soon they had worked up the material they wanted to put on record and, at the end of April in 1928, made the overnight train ride to Chicago.

Early the next day, after their arrival in the Windy City, Reaves White County Ramblers (the only time they used the name which, apparently, was thought up by Pope) were in the recording studio. In four hours time, they cut twelve sides, mostly old fiddle tunes, in a drafty, makeshift studio in an old hotel. The men were nervous about the session and made several false starts. "Ike" Reaves had considerable trouble getting the beginning of "Ten

Cent Piece" right, even though he had played it perfectly on many occasions, including the practice sessions in Searcy before the trip. However, once they got over their shaky start, everything proceeded well. Ira Reaves proudly recalls that only one retake of an entire tune was necessary. There was, though, some dissatisfaction with the man in charge of the recording session, who suggested changes in several of their arrangements. This precipitated some arguing and even threats on the part of a couple of band members to leave the studio and return to Arkansas. In an expression of disgust, Ira Reaves even sat out one number. "He kept doing this and that and the other and I said, 'You're lousing it up.' And he said, 'I've been in this business twenty-seven years.' And I said, 'I don't care if you've been in it seventy-seven years, you're still lousing it up.'"

Once the session was over, the group went to the train depot and immediately returned to Arkansas. Ira Reaves recalls, "They offered to hold us over but I told them I had all of Chicago I ever wanted." Each of their twelve songs was soon released on the Brunswick label and, while these 78s never sold in great quantities, they did include some important and excellent music. All of the cuts feature the organ, an instrument much more common in Southern old time dance music than its relatively rare appearance on commercial recordings might indicate. There were also several examples of Ike's cross-tuned numbers and two sides, "Ten Cent Piece" and "Drunkard's Hiccoughs," feature the seldom recorded practice of beating straws on the fiddle.

The Chicago trip proved to be the group's first and last recording session although Ira Reaves recalls that a second trip was planned. This time they were to record in Birmingham for the Columbia label but the deal fell through. While they made no more 78s, the Reaves Brothers all continued to be musically active for some time, though music was never more than a sideline to them. Ike worked at a sawmill and was a blacksmith, Ira was a farmer and carpenter, and Lloyd was a carpenter. Ira performed longer than either of his brothers, first with a group called The Foggy Mountain Boys. This band included R. C. Smith, a black guitarist, singer, and dancer, and played a repertoire of mostly western swing standards like "Under the Double Eagle" and "San Antonio Rose." Then, later, Ira headed a group called The Rocky Mountain Boys that played popular and country-western songs of the day for local parties. By the end of the 1940s he had abandoned music altogether.

Was it poor sales that spelled an end to the recording careers of the Reaves White County Ramblers or were other factors equally responsible? At this late date it may be impossible to answer the question definitively, especially since some of those

directly involved are fuzzy on the details. It is possible that the members had the same suspicions about Pope that the Arkansas Mountaineers harbored. Some tension between Pope and the band seems to be suggested in Ira Reaves' remarks that no musicians received copies of the records although he believes they sold fairly well. When pressed for information on Pope, Ira replied, "I don't know any more about the Pops than I do Pope John." Later, he added, "Now except that one time being around him, going up there to record, I don't know one pop-eyed thing about him." Yet, earlier, he indicated that he knew him as an excellent piano salesman.

Whatever the reasons, the recording ventures of Reaves White County Ramblers and Milton Pope both ended on a freezing day in a Chicago studio. But in that same year, several other groups from Arkansas also started their recording careers and they, too, were mostly one-session bands. This includes the longest lived Arkansas string band recorded during the 1920s, which also happens to be one of the largest mountain groups ever recorded. Organized and led by a non-playing member, Dr. Smith's Champion Horse-Hair Pullers was based in the tiny Arkansas mountain town of Calico Rock.

The moving force behind the Horse-Hair Pullers was Dr. Henry Harlin Smith, one of Izard County's leading citizens and a tireless supporter of Ozark culture. Indeed, the band came into existence mainly because of his desire to promote Izard County. Among his initial schemes to bring more people into the area was a fiddle contest held in Smith's hometown, Calico Rock, in January, 1926. The winners of this contest formed the nucleus of the Horse-Hair Pullers, the band being filled out with the addition of four singers that Smith called the Hill-Billy Quartet. This aggregation played locally and occasionally for functions of the Missouri Pacific Railroad for which Dr. Smith served as acting surgeon from 1906 until his death in 1931. Then on 13 March 1926, the band gained a wider audience when they performed over radio station KTHS, Hot Springs, Arkansas. Apparently the program was well received, for newspapers of the time report that 225 telegrams applauding the presentation came into the station while Smith's group was on the air. During the next week, several more telegrams and phone calls arrived asking for the band's return. Smith brought them back for at least two more shows even though it must have required considerable time to get from Calico Rock to Hot Springs. Today the trip takes four hours and, on the primitive roads of 1926, must have taken much longer.

In 1928, Smith's band traveled to Memphis where they recorded six sides for Victor. According to some of the band members, the group was told

to play anything they wanted as long as it was not under copyright. The six selections include a ballad that can be traced back to the nineteenth century; a traditional song made up mainly from "floating verses;" one religious song; two "coon songs;" and a sentimental parlor piece from the late nineteenth century. This selection can probably be considered representative of the breadth of the band's repertoire, especially since some former members have said that is the case, but is misleading in some ways. For example, several persons interviewed during the past seven years recall that Smith's group featured a large number of comedy and gospel songs in their stage presentations. The former are well represented on the 1928 recordings but gospel items are not.

Smith's band continued to perform until 1930 when some members, like fiddler Bryan Lackey, moved out of state and dropped out of music altogether. Although at no time did the group contain more than eight members, four instrumentalists and four vocalists, the personnel shifted slightly over the years. This is undoubtedly due to the very informal nature of the band, a venture that all of the members looked upon as merely a sideline. They were united primarily because of their love of music and Dr. Smith. At least thirteen men are known to have belonged to the organization at various times.

Dr. Smith outlasted his band by only a short time. On 14 October 1931, while driving to Little Rock, he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and, although he was taken to a hospital, he never regained consciousness. Thus, at the age of fifty, the life of one of Izard County's leading citizens ended. But, while Dr. Smith is gone, he is hardly forgotten. Today, more than a half century after his death, he is still fondly remembered by residents of Calico Rock and that is perhaps the best possible testimony to the character of this man who, for a brief time, figured prominently in the history of Arkansas country music.

Dr. Smith's band recorded in September 1928, but seven months earlier, a band made up of much younger personnel (Smith's members were mostly in their thirties) made its recording debut also in Memphis. This venture was the climax of the group's brief musical career which began in Vandale, Arkansas, a small community located in Cross County, some forty miles from the Tennessee line. For the recording session, they took the name The Arkansas Barefoot Boys but, ordinarily, they were just known as "the band." Although the Barefoot Boys started playing together in the late 1920s, their story begins a few years earlier when two cousins, James Leroy Sims and Cyrus Futrell, moved from their native Cross County, Arkansas, to southeast Missouri.



James L. "Roy" Sims was born in Cherry Valley, Arkansas, 14 October 1907, and Cyrus Futrell was born in Vanndale, Arkansas, 21 May 1909. Although they were first cousins, they were raised as brothers. About 1919, their family moved to Kennett, Missouri, a small town about one hundred miles northeast of Cross County. There they learned to play fiddle and guitar, teaching themselves on instruments ordered from Sears and Roebuck. They also came into contact with a dredgeboat operator on the St. Francis River who was a good fiddler; with him, the cousins formed a string band that played for local musicals and dances. A short time later, Sims and Futrell moved back to Arkansas where they became acquainted with Hubert Haines, a proficient guitarist and fiddler whose father was also an old time fiddler and the source for several of the tunes performed by the new band.

William F. Harrison, a music teacher at the Vanndale High School, learned about the musical activities of Sims, Futrell, and Haines, and encouraged them by arranging for them to play in chapel, at various dances, for commencement programs, and the like. It was through his connections that their recording session on the OKeh label was arranged. Unfortunately, transportation was not provided so the young men had to find a way to reach the recording studio. They hired a friend, William Campbell, who had a Model T Ford, to take them to Memphis; as part of his pay, they allowed him to play harmonica on the record.

In addition to having an extra musician, the band also acquired a name. A few days prior to the Memphis session, the group thought it would be best if they had a name. Cyrus Futrell came up with The Arkansas Barefoot Boys and that was the one that appeared on the record label. Certainly it was fitting that they were called boys for all of the members were young. Futrell, who played fiddle on the session, was only eighteen; Sims, who played harmonica, was twenty; Haines, the guitarist, was twenty-one; and Campbell, the second harmonica player, was twenty-two.

Of the four tunes the Arkansas Barefoot Boys recorded, only two were issued. One, "I Love Somebody" (generally known in Arkansas as "Crooked Stovepipe") had been learned from Albert McMarion, a fiddler from Kentucky who had relatives in Vanndale, Arkansas. He spent one winter in the town and, during that time, taught the piece to Cyrus Futrell. According to Roy Sims, the Barefoot Boys usually called the tune "Crooked Stovepipe" but on the record it appeared as "I Love Somebody," suggesting that someone other than the band supplied the title.

The other tune issued from this session was "The Eighth of January," possibly Arkansas' most

popular fiddle tune. While the tune had been performed by many local musicians, the Barefoot Boys were more influenced by versions they heard on records and radio. Nevertheless, their rendition was not a carbon copy of anyone else's for they improvised freely on the tune. The other tunes recorded, but not released, were "Soldier's Joy," which they learned from a recording by Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers, and "Benton County Hog Thief." This latter number, which was as close as the group came to a vocal, featured Cyrus Futrell supplying hog calls and was a piece that the band apparently had from oral tradition.

The four member Arkansas Barefoot Boys never played together after that day in February, 1928. The three original members continued performing at local dances and musicals until Hubert Haines got married in the early 1930s. It is unfortunate that this group made no more records, for they reportedly had a repertoire of about three hundred tunes including some rarely encountered items like "Old Mother Barber" as well as a number of gospel songs and "modern" ballads like Carson Robison's "Zeb Turney's Gal." After Haines left, Sims and Futrell continued playing on an irregular basis until 1946 when Futrell moved to New Mexico and gave up music for several years. Since 1971, he has lived near Mtn. View, Arkansas, where he occasionally gathers neighbors at his house for an evening of music making. Sometimes the group includes the other members of the Arkansas Barefoot Boys, with whom he recorded over a half-century ago.

The final group under consideration here is one who, unlike the other bands discussed here, may have remained in obscurity partly because of a spelling error. For many years country music researchers have been searching for a Luke Hignight with little success. The chief reason for their failure is that no one by that name existed, the real last name was Hignight.<sup>10</sup> The blame for this situation can be given to the record companies who inadvertently supplied the wrong name to those seeking biographical data on the man. It is not hard to ascertain why there was great interest in him, for with his group, the Ozark Strutters, he performed some of the most exciting music ever put on record by an Arkansas group.

The leader of the band was born Luther Burton Hignight in Hollywood, Arkansas, 27 September 1898. His family, consisting of a brother, six half-brothers and a half-sister, were all musical, performing mainly for their own entertainment. Young Luther also learned to play and sing; by the time he was a teenager, he had mastered the piano, reed organ, mandolin, Jew's harp, harmonica, and banjo. The last two were the instruments he favored, so he devised a harmonica holder that enabled him

to play both simultaneously. From his father, M. C., and his brother, Rush, he learned a number of old ballads and soon became as well known for his vocal abilities as for his instrumental proficiency. His daughter, Venetta, recalls that he frequently sang "Birmingham Jail," "Red River Valley," and several more obscure items.

In 1917, Hignight's musical career began to gain momentum. In the mid-1920s he headed one of the first country acts to perform over KTHS (Kum To Hot Springs) in Hot Springs, Arkansas. This initial radio group possibly included M. C. Hignight, Luke's father, and may have been billed Luke Hignight's Ozark Strutters. Certainly the band used this name on its radio broadcasts. Obviously, these programs achieved some local popularity, for family members recall that the group received lots of fan mail, and even love letters.

In the late 1920s Hignight got a chance to make his first recordings. He was one of three members of Minton's Ozark String Band, a group consisting of Frank Gardner, fiddle, Hignight, banjo, and Sherman Tedder, guitar, that did a session for Okeh in Memphis, Tennessee, 25 February 1928. Unfortunately, none of the band's four cuts was ever issued; the same fate befell a Hignight vocal and a Sherman Tedder instrumental recorded at the same time. It is especially regrettable that the cut of Hignight singing was not released because, apparently, it was the only recording ever made of his vocalizing.

On 22 November 1928, nine months after the Okeh session, Hignight returned to Memphis to make six sides for Vocalion. This group, billed as Luke Hignight's Ozark Strutters (although his name was misspelled on the record label), consisted of Gardner on fiddle, Hignight on banjo and harmonica, and Henry Tucker on guitar. Of the six cuts from this session, five were issued; only "Love Somebody" (a version of a tune also known as "Chinquapin" and "Crooked Stovepipe") was not released. The five sides probably provide a good example of the instrumentals Hignight and group performed on radio, but one wishes that either he, or the record company, had seen fit to include some of the singing for which he was well-known regionally. The fiddler plays lead on all of the cuts with Hignight's strong, ringing banjo and Tucker's subdued, unobtrusive guitar providing the backing. Hignight's harmonica, playing along with the fiddle, is also very evident on most of the selections and, on "Fort Smith Break-down," the two instruments alternate lead.

It is probably impossible at this late date to determine how well releases by the Ozark Strutters sold, but the fact that they never made any more records is perhaps a sufficient comment on their success. Nevertheless, the quality of their music

was high and the group continued to play on KTHS and other radio stations in the Hot Springs area. For several years, they performed on a Saturday evening country music program in Hot Springs and also frequently provided music for square dances held at Whittington Park in the city. Yet, despite his local popularity, Hignight never considered music anything more than a sideline. He earned his living as a hunting guide and through a variety of other jobs. His experiences all came to an end when he died on 4 July 1940.

Now, to answer the question posed at the beginning of this paper, namely, why were the sales of records by Arkansas string bands generally low? Why did they fail to achieve any widespread popularity? Certainly the suggestion that they were not influenced by pop, jazz, and vaudeville influences can only be accepted in a limited sense. Most of these groups played for audiences that had a wide range of tastes and, if they wished to have any success, needed to display a similarly broad range of music. Some members, in fact, preferred popular items to more traditional ones, as was the case with Ira Reaves of Reaves White County Ramblers. Others learned parts of their repertoires from mass media sources, as did the Arkansas Barefoot Boys. While the recorded repertoire may sound relatively archaic it should not always be taken as typical of their general output. Sometimes, as in the instance of the Reaves White County Ramblers, only the more old-fashioned songs were chosen for recording, while the more modern material was just as often featured when they played for live audiences. Dr. Smith's recordings, however, included at least two songs straight from the vaudeville stage. In brief, the Arkansas string bands were susceptible to the same influences that were factors in the development of rural music elsewhere. But, if that is so, then what explains their general failure to produce any "national hits?"

Possibly one important consideration is that few of the Arkansas groups were long-lived-most of them made only a single recording session and disappeared. Even Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers, one of the most popular Arkansas Bands recorded during the 1920s, had only one session even though their records sold fairly well throughout the South. Certainly no Arkansas group compared in longevity with north Georgia's Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers who, in various forms, survived for a decade and a half. In the case of the Mountaineers, tensions between the group and their manager prevented them from making further records and this was possibly the case with other groups, but certainly not with all. They simply didn't sell well enough to warrant further records. For example, the best-selling record by Dr. Smith's Horse-Hair Pullers sold less than 5,000 copies, low figures even by depres-



sion standards of 1929. Smith's group was far longer-lived than the other bands considered here, so the lack of longevity can hardly be used in their instance.

Another problem with using the short life of bands to explain their failure to capture a widespread audience is that it is like deciding which came first, the chicken or the egg. True, most bands were short-lived but perhaps they would have lasted considerably longer had they had a notable success. Solving the question is, of course, a complex matter involving several factors, one of which is that the Arkansas bands were far less professional in their approach to music, than, say, a group like the Skillet Lickers. Most of them really didn't consider themselves professional musicians at all, but rather, thought of their music as a spare-time activity.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, such as that of the Arkansas Barefoot Boys, musicians were featured on their records who were not even part of their regular group. As the remarks by Ira Reaves and others demonstrate, many of the Arkansas bands didn't really think of themselves as anything other than a random grouping of musicians gathered for a single recording session. But, again, this situation is probably not greatly different than that found among 1920s country musicians from other areas. So, while their spare-time approach to music may explain why some bands never achieved a "hit," it fails to answer the problem entirely.

One important, but rarely mentioned, point is that many groups were relatively uninterested in making or promoting records. For example, Bryan Lackey, a fiddler with Dr. Smith's Champion Horse-Hair Pullers, recalled that he and the other band members were far more excited about radio appearances than they were about their recording session.<sup>12</sup> Their feeling is perhaps understandable for, in the 1920s, radio was much more of a novelty than records. Although at that early date few country musicians had appeared on recordings, cylinders and, after 1910, 78s were relatively common. Most Americans, however, were unaware of radio prior to 1920 and Arkansas' first station, WOK ("Workers of Kilowatts") in Pine Bluff, was established only in 1922. My own interviews over the past several years indicate that the attitude of Smith's band was not an uncommon one. But, since few researchers have sought out such information, it is hard to say how significant a factor such feelings played in determining a band's lack of recording success. It seems certain, though, that virtually no Arkansas bands promoted their own records, an attitude entirely different from that found among country artists of the 1980s.

Undoubtedly, geographical location played some part in the lack of popularity of 78s by Arkansas musicians. Being located far from the headquarters of the companies specializing in country music,

they simply had fewer opportunities to make records and, as a result, produced fewer successes than their counterparts from the Southeast. The midwestern states where they were located received relatively scanty attention during the early years of the recording industry. Indeed, some authorities believe that one reason midwestern ragtime was sparsely recorded is precisely because of the geographic location of the musicians.<sup>13</sup> But midwestern ragtime was better represented on records than Arkansas country music of the 1920s, for the commercial rural recording industry of that era focused almost entirely on the Southeast. Even the occasional performer from another area who succeeded was generally recorded in the East. While the majority of Eastern country musicians were not exactly in the back yards of the record companies, they were still closer than the Arkansas performers. Furthermore, several record producers made frequent field recording forays into the Southeast while relatively few were held in Arkansas. In fact, the most extended country music session in the state was not held until 1937 when an A. R. C. field unit recorded 81 sides by 14 different acts in Hot Springs. By then, such excursions were commonplace in the Southeast.

Arkansas's population also undoubtedly played a role in the relative lack of recording opportunities. Even today, the Bear State has a total citizenship of only two million, about the same number of people found in greater Memphis and Nashville. During the 1920s, this figure was, of course, considerably lower and meant that there was a relatively small potential audience of buyers for the records produced by Arkansas performers. In the early years of the commercial country recording industry, 78s were aimed primarily at buyers in the artist's home area. Only a handful of companies were involved in the business of making rural records and, understandably considering their motives, they wanted to put them out in the areas where they could realize the greatest potential profit.

Here, then, are some factors that help to explain why Arkansas string bands, in particular the five considered here, had little success in terms of total record sales. Their short life, their haphazard membership, their non-professional approach, their lack of interest in records, their location far from the headquarters of record companies, and the resulting lack of recording opportunities, and their potentially smaller record buying audience, all seem to be important considerations. Certainly they do not explain the lack of sales success of every pre-1932 Arkansas string band but they do help elucidate the matter. Definitive answers to the matter we may never have, for, arriving at ultimate solutions to such problems may be like trying to nail jelly to the wall. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties, such questions are well worth consideration.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The situation is changing for the better but the statement still holds true despite such recent exceptions as Bill Malone's, Country Music U. S. A.: A Fifty-Year History (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1968) and Bill C. Malone and Judith McCulloh's, Stars of Country Music: Uncle Dave Macon to Johnny Rodriguez (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Cohen's essay, "Early Pioneers," appears in Malone and McCulloh, Stars of Country Music, pp. 3-39. Sprague and Robertson get only two pages each while Henry Whitter, Fiddlin' John Carson, Ernest Stoneman, Charlie Poole, Gid Tanner, Riley Puckett, and Clayton McMichen are given most of the space.

<sup>3</sup> This three-volume set was issued in 1970 and has since been repressed several times as County 518, 519, 520.

<sup>4</sup> All quotes in this section are taken from an interview with "Tip" McKinney in Searcy, Arkansas on May 22, 1981. Any exceptions are so noted. In 1973 Julia Hager and Jim Olin also interviewed McKinney, publishing the transcript in The Devil's Box 9:4 (December 1, 1975), pp. 23-40. I have checked their transcript as well as my own to find any possible discrepancies between the two.

<sup>5</sup> McKinney mentioned no such audition either in my interview or in the one with Hager and Olin but it is mentioned in Raymond Lee Muncy, Searcy, Arkansas: A Frontier Town Grows Up with America (Searcy, Arkansas: Harding Press, 1976), p. 239. Most of Muncy's information seems to come from two local papers, Searcy News and Searcy Local Citizen, although he doesn't cite these as the source for his information about the local audition.

<sup>6</sup> Unless noted otherwise the information here comes from an interview with Ira Reaves in McRae, Arkansas on April 26, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> All of the information in this section comes from interviews with various people in Calico Rock during the years 1977-1981 and with former members of Smith's band. I have also relied on Frances Hook Jernigan's article, "Dr. Henry Harlin Smith 1881-1931" in The Izard County Historian 5:2 (April, 1974), pp. 2-9 and Helen C. Lindley's, "The Hoss-Hair Pullers and Hill-Billy Quartet" also in the same issue of The Izard County Historian, pp. 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> The songs include "In the Garden Where the Irish Potatoes Grow," a ballad also known in the Arkansas Ozarks as "The Beebe Blossom" and which can be traced back at least to the 1870's; "Up In Glory," a gospel song by James Rowe; "Going Down the River," a song made up of "floating verses;" "Save My Mother's Picture from the Sale," a sentimental parlor piece from the 1880's; "Give Me the Leavin's" and "Nigger Baby," both "coon songs" probably dating from the turn of the century although I have been unable to find an exact date.

<sup>9</sup> All information in this section comes from interviews with James L. "Roy" Sims in Cherry Valley, Arkansas on February 11, 1981 and with Cyrus Futrell in Mt. View, Arkansas on February 13, 1981.

<sup>10</sup> All information in this section comes from an interview with Hignight's daughter, Venetta Staley, in Mt. View, Arkansas on September 29, 1979 and from subsequent correspondence with her.

<sup>11</sup> It may be argued that the same can be said for most Appalachian musicians and, to an extent, that is true. It, however, can not be said of such performers as Riley Puckett, Clayton McMichen, or Charlie Poole, to mention just a few. In the sense of a person who earned a major portion of his income from his music there is no Arkansas stringband performer comparable to the McMichens, the Pucketts, or the Pooles.

<sup>12</sup> In an interview at his home in Fittstown, Oklahoma on June 4, 1977.

<sup>13</sup> The traditional view is that ragtime was rarely recorded on 78s and cylinders during its initial era of popularity (1897-1917) because the piano was not an instrument whose sound could be adequately captured by the recording equipment of that day. Recently this has been challenged by such authorities as Dave Jasen.

# THE ECONOMICS OF HILLBILLY RADIO: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE "P.I." SYSTEM IN THE DEPRESSION DECADE AND AFTERWARD

Ivan M. Tribe

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In 1937 a forerunner of Ralph Nader as a consumer protection advocate named Peter Morell launched an attack upon radio advertising entitled Poisons, Potions and Profits. While his book got minimal tangible results in terms of immediate change, Morell did correctly identify a close link between radio broadcasting and a cultural phenomenon from America's past. He wrote,

The American system of broadcasting . . . is a direct development of the medicine tent-wagon that was so common . . . before the turn of the century. . . . When a likely spot was found the "pitchman" would appear at the back of the wagon and shout: "C'mon, folks, the Big Show is here."

Continuing in this vein, Morell argued "the pitchman of modern radio is 'selling the same old snake oil, herbs, cosmetics or kitchen appliances with the same old method.'"<sup>1</sup>

Contending that under ordinary circumstances, most people today would be too intelligent to be misled, he went on to say,

But suppose that the pitchman is . . . given a course in radio elocution, provided with a script turned out by an imaginative copywriter, and brought to the microphone after an eye-moistening program of Texas cowboy songs. The radio audience would then hear something like this:

## CRAZY WATER CRYSTALS

Almost all of us know that there's a cause for everything. A cause for the depression, a cause for the recovery which we see throughout the nation today. You can be mighty, mighty sure there's a cause for your own ill health if you are in ill health today. Often to conquer the trouble you need only to find its cause and correct it. Faulty elimination, simply the retaining of wastes too

long in the body is known as a frequent cause of some of the severest disorders that people suffer. Now if you have arthritis, if you have pain and stiffness in your arms and knees or wrists known as rheumatism, if you suffer from neuritis, backache, or upset stomach, faulty elimination may be the cause of your ailment and always aggravates such disorders. The thing to do then is to get at the cause, of course, to cleanse your system regularly, thoroughly, so that nature may have a chance to conquer your ailments. Crazy Mineral Water has been used by thousands for over 54 years and for that very purpose it's a natural cleanser blended by nature herself deep in the Crazy Wells. The minerals taken by evaporation from Natural Crazy Mineral Water are known the world over as Crazy Water Crystals. You can make your own Crazy Mineral Water right at home or wherever you may be simply by adding Crazy Water Crystals to your regular drinking water. That's simple, isn't it? And it's pleasant to the taste, pleasant acting, too. Wash away the very cause, get rid of the body's impurities so likely to produce toxic poisons. Poisons that cause many diseases and aggravate all diseases. Try Crazy Water Crystals. They're simple and easy to use. Just add them to ordinary drinking water, that's all.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this study is not like that of Peter Morell to pass judgment upon the ethics of radio advertising, but rather to make a preliminary investigation of the relationship between economics and a vital segment of American culture—specifically country music during the golden age of radio. Certainly what one might term the commercial coincidence that existed between down-home styled entertainment and patent medicine not only predated their connections in radio advertising, but in a sense provided precedent for it. Although perhaps not of medicine show origin, many of the nostrums associated with hillbilly music bear names that can conjure up an image of the products linked with medicine shows—Crazy Water Crystals, Scalf's Indian River Medicine, Pow-a-Tan Tonic, and Hamlin's Wizard Oil.

## HAMLIN'S WIZARD OIL

Come all you jolly listeners and listen while I toil,  
I've got some more to tell you about Hamlin's  
Wizard Oil.

In the medicine chest, on the family shelf, you  
find it ever there,  
To relieve muscular aches and pain at druggists  
everywhere.

The evolution of the Hamlin's Wizard Oil Company of Chicago illustrates well the transition from medicine show to radio hillbilly music. Founded by a one-time magician named John A. Hamlin in ante-bellum Cincinnati, the firm moved to Chicago during the Civil War years. As his company prospered Hamlin built a grand opera house in the Windy City. He also sent out show troupes to sell and advertise his product via lectures, parlor organ, and quartet music. By the 1930s, however, the company pitched their famous liniment via old-time songs as performed by such radio singers as the "Hamlin's Singing Cowboy" at KLRA Little Rock or Blue Grass Roy Freeman who worked at stations extending from KRLD Dallas to Hartford, Connecticut between 1932 and 1941.<sup>4</sup>

Since the main boom in country music during the 1930s occurred as a result of its popularity on the spreading medium of radio and the economy was in a slump in that period, one might ask how did the system work. Often we are told that stations paid no salaries and that artists survived on what they made from personal appearances. This was indeed often true, but it ignores the question of how did the radio stations survive and prosper. Again, we often hear that some sponsors purchased air time but paid musicians nothing. Some generous sponsors at times did pay salaries to their musicians. Still another situation and apparently quite a common one was what many musicians referred to as the "PI system." Under the practice of "per inquiry" stations received payment "by means of a commission of a specified amount on each unit of goods sold by it." The development of "per inquiry" came as a reaction to the Great Depression. In 1933, Herman S. Hettinger of the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce wrote that numerous radio "stations are faced with declining local business due to the protracted business depression, and are willing to accept accounts at any rate which the sponsor is willing to pay." Under such conditions, radio station management bore the brunt of proving itself capable of selling products. As Hettinger aptly stated, "it had the affect of putting the broadcaster into the retailing business."<sup>5</sup>

This learned academic of merchandising no doubt correctly saw that such a system could lead to abuses and invite a stricter degree of regulation.

Be that as it may, per inquiry not only survived the depression that gave it birth but soared to new heights during the years of war-time and post-war prosperity. In many instances, it also continued into the era when deejays replaced live performers. One suspects that a modified form of it persists in the recent wave of television commercials that have returned Slim Whitman to star status, made Boxcar Willie into a star, and even returned Wilf Carter to a degree of prominence.

The importance of stimulating sales placed heavy emphasis on the pitchman. The mere fact that those individuals who delivered commercials were known as pitchmen further strengthens the connections between the medicine show of recent antiquity and the hillbilly radio program. A few pitchmen such as Johnnie Bailes at Shreveport, circa 1947-1948, were so highly valued by their station managers that they received additional salaries.<sup>6</sup> Most, however, were rewarded in more subtle ways such as receiving more favorable time spots or more reputable products. A wide variety of pitchmen developed. Some like the one heard on the Crazy Water Crystals transcriptions worked only as announcers. Others were musicians themselves like Blue Grass Roy on the Hamlin's Wizard Oil ad who spent many years as a company employee. In some instances, well-known successful musicians who lacked talents for commercials would hire pitchmen/announcers in the same manner that they would employ sidemen in their bands.

Within the ranks of pitchmen, a variety of styles evolved. Some like Bill Karnes of Crazy Water Crystals relied on a smooth dignified delivery. Others relied on a simple down-home sincerity that paralleled their singing and musical stylings. Still others attempted with success to gain sympathy from their audiences and a few capitalized on a style of outlandish flamboyance.

Although some attention was given to stimulate sales through box-top offers for products sold in stores, a great deal of attention was placed on mail order purchase items. Nationwide, one of the leading purveyors of this system was the Sunway Vitamin Company. At various times, this Chicago based firm sponsored numerous live country musicians on many stations. From my own recent research on West Virginia radio artists, I came to the realization that such important figures as the Bailes Brothers, the Davis Twins, Little Jimmy Dickens, Harmie Smith, and Buddy Starcher had at least partially achieved prominence through their relationship with Sunway Vitamins. These connections took them far from their native Mountain State to locations ranging from Louisiana and Kansas to major urban centers like Philadelphia.





(above)  
Buddy Starcher in 1940, with Smilie Sutter (left) and Ted Grant (center), WMMN, Fairmont, West Virginia (Photo courtesy of Ivan Tribe)

(right)  
Loye Donald Pack, aka "Cowboy Loye," WMMN, Fairmont, West Virginia (Photo courtesy of Ivan Tribe)



Apparently at various times, Sunway had two types of arrangements with radio stations. Johnnie Bailes recalls that they used a practice somewhat standard in the industry of a 60-40 split. The company took 60% of the receipts and gave the stations 40%. The stations paid the artists 10% to 15% of the gross with the more established salesmen usually able to receive the higher commission. Buddy Starcher remembers--and this may have been at a somewhat different time; certainly it was at a time when the various Sunway sponsored artists were involved in a national competition for sales that Sunway took none of the initial gross for themselves, but let the radio stations divide the dollar 85-15. The vitamin firm made their profits on reorders of which they took the entire amount.

During 1947-1948, all of the Sunway artists competed nationally. The winner received a new 1948 Frazier sedan and a year at a 50,000 watt station WCAU Philadelphia. At the time Buddy Starcher worked at WPDJ Clarksburg, West Virginia. A new 1,000 watt station, WPDJ had gone on the air only in mid 1947 with a daytime format that emphasized generous portions of live country music and openly aspired to compete with the larger 5,000 watt WMMN Fairmont station some twenty-five miles to the north. Buddy won the contest, the Frazier, and the Philadelphia spot. He had averaged 300 letters/orders a day during the period of competition from a relatively small station located in an area where the local coal industry was in a degree of decline. This would suggest an average daily gross income of \$45.00. What Starcher does not recall is whether or not Sunway made some allowance for station size.

At Philadelphia, Starcher continued to sell Sunway Vitamins effectively. His sales, however, did not increase in proportion to the station's power, size, population, and prosperity of the market area. He says he usually received at least 300 orders daily and sometimes as many as 500 to 600 with average perhaps being near 400. He also had transcriptions of his Philadelphia programs played back in West Virginia over WMMN Fairmont and at other localities where he had an established name.

Starcher's success as a radio salesman derived largely from his simple sincere style both as an announcer and as a singer. Neither flamboyant nor excessively folksy, he built up a legion of devoted fans at the stations where he worked or had transcriptions played. He gained a reputation as a radio salesman that placed him in the top five. Since he never appeared regularly on the networks and seldom headquartered at 50,000 watt stations, this seems all the more remarkable. One person referred to him as being a hillbilly equivalent of Arthur Godfrey who occupied a somewhat similar reputation among the broader spectrum of the

American populace. Starcher achieved popularity wherever he played, but enjoyed particular favor in West Virginia and adjacent areas where he headquartered in the listening range of Charleston, Clarksburg, Fairmont, and Harrisonburg. He also had a large following in the far Midwest as a result of his live shows and transcriptions broadcast from KMA Shenandoah, Iowa. Still gentlemanly, a simple, sincere humble person at the age of 79, Starcher carefully answers his occasional fan mail and will tape songs on cassette if requested.

A somewhat more sophisticated version of Buddy Starcher can be found in the advertising approach of Charlie Arnett. Like Starcher, Arnett came from West Virginia and his musical vocal talents frequently ran in the direction of recitations. Unlike Starcher, he had some formal education and played a bouncy hillbilly piano. Often known as "Old Brother Charlie," Arnett led country bands over numerous radio stations, worked as a duet with his wife Ethel Irene (known professionally as Daisy Mae), and sometimes also doubled as a station announcer. In 1944, Charlie Monroe hired him as announcer/pitchman for his transcribed series of Noonday Jamboree programs that were broadcast over several stations in the Carolinas. At the time, Monroe was pushing his own laxative, a product known as Man-O-Ree. Since it was war-time, Old Brother Charlie also made appeals to patriotism in addition to the usual comments about good health.

#### MAN-O-REE

MAN-O-REE is on the air and we hope that  
you'll be there,  
For we want to say hello to one and all.  
If you're feeling down and out, we can say  
without a doubt,  
What you need right now is MAN-O-REE.<sup>10</sup>

No recorded examples have been found of four other noted artist/pitchmen. However, their style and relative significance merits some attention. The first of these, Loye Donald Pack or "Cowboy Loye" (1900-1941) attained most of his fame at WWVA Wheeling from 1933 to 1937 and at WMMN Fairmont from 1937 until a few days prior to his death. A native of Tennessee, Pack apparently had some authentic experience as a Nebraska ranch hand before entering radio at York, Nebraska in 1929. He came to Wheeling in 1933 from a Columbus, Ohio station and spent most of his remaining life at either WWVA or WMMN. Grandpa Jones who worked close to Loye at both stations recalled his opening comment as sounding something like this:

Thank you . . . and good morning,  
radio friends. We are proud to bring  
to you a program of old-time songs



and tunes and we hope, too, that you will listen with interest a little later on in the program when I will bring to you a true, and what we hope a helpful message about genuine blue Bonnett Crystals and now here is Smiley Lowe to play for you on his electric Hawaiian guitar an old tune entitled "Lay My Head Beneath the Rose."

Jones added, "that wasn't a very flashy opening, but Cowboy Loye could sell anything."<sup>11</sup>

That may have been an overstatement, but Loye did have talents as a salesman. Having observed the success enjoyed by the firms selling salt crystals (to-wit Crazy Water, Texas, and Certified), Loye ordered box-carloads of the raw stuff from Texas and he and his band, the Blue Bonnett Troupe, spent their days when they weren't broadcasting boxing up the crystals in the Blue Bonnett containers they had made themselves. After Loye died in March 1941, his most popular act, the Blue Bonnett Girls, kept selling Blue Bonnett Crystals for quite some time via the PI type sales pitch.<sup>12</sup>

Another successful pitchman, Byron Parker (1911-1948), began his career in his native Iowa, but reached his peak in the Carolinas. In late 1934, Parker met Bill and Charlie Monroe and became their announcer and booking agent. He also joined in on vocals that needed a bass singer. He came to the Carolinas with the Monroe Brothers in 1935 and continued in those same capacities until forming his own group in April 1937 on WIS Columbia, South Carolina. After a brief association with J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers, Parker's band centered around two former Mainer band members Snuffy Jenkins and Leonard Stokes with the addition of Homer Sherill on fiddle. Known on radio as the WIS Hillbillies and on record as Byron Parker's Mountaineers, the nucleus of Jenkins and Sherill remained with Parker until his death in October 1948. Frequently referred to as the "Old Hired Hand," Parker's main talent was in salesmanship. J. E. Mainer who didn't care much for him said, "Boy, he could sell the shoes off of your feet." A friendlier person commented, "Byron Parker could have sold struck matches!" Pat Ahrens wrote that he "very seldom used scripts. His gift was one of perfected ad-libbling" and that many people in the Carolinas considered him "the greatest radio announcer ever heard on the air." Parker, it seemed, "spoke to each listener" as an "individual."<sup>13</sup>

A third noted pitchman Finley Duncan "Red" Belcher capitalized on a flamboyant but crude style. A native of Kentucky where he was born in 1914, Belcher at various times plied his trade on radio in Tuscola, Illinois; Springfield, Missouri; Wheeling, Fairmont, and Harrisonburg. Unschoolled and a total illiterate according to virtually all

former associates, Belcher learned his lines at night by having his wife read them aloud until Red had memorized them. Still, his flagrant mispronunciations worked to his advantage. Buddy Starcher recalled comments like, "friends, you'll get a whole hunnert fer jest a dollar." Somehow this flare for words hit home, perhaps with those whose own educational weaknesses caused them to hold Belcher both in awe and pity at the same time. Like Parker, Belcher supplemented his somewhat limited musical talents with hired sidemen—often a brother duo such as Everett and Mitchell Lilly or Mel and Stan Hankinson. Until his death in an early 1950s auto crash, Belcher remained a reputable and successful radio pitchman.<sup>14</sup>

A fourth duo of pitchmen—Jim and Bob Raines—apparently stretched their credibility to the limit by exaggerating their own financial needs. This father/son duo worked in such eastern locales as Fairmont and Harrisonburg and farther west in Shenandoah, Iowa; Grand Island, Nebraska; and Wichita, Kansas. According to the wife of a contemporary, the Raines' would encourage radio listeners to believe that their children were desperate for food, clothing, school supplies, and shoes in order to stimulate sales of the sponsor's products. When off the air, the Raines' would allegedly brag about how much they made and how much cash they carried on their persons. Such tactics may have been financially rewarding, but did little to win them friends or positively influence fellow entertainers who seem to have thought that they had gone too far.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to assembling their own products in the manner of Cowboy Loye's Blue Bonnett Crystals, Charlie Monroe's Man-O-Ree, or W. Lee O'Daniel's Hillbilly Flour, country musicians also put their names and talents to work through the PI system. Minstrel and Medicine show companies had hawked songsters for decades and the sale of song books and pictures via radio mail order antedated the Great Depression. Sears-Roebuck and Company had marketed the Bradley Kincaid Hound Dog Guitars and the Gene Autry Roundup Guitars. Frank Welling, a WSAZ Huntington radio performer, opened a guitar studio as early as 1928 based on his name as a recording and radio artist and offered a free guitar, Hawaiian guitar, or ukulele to those who successfully completed his course. Welling's business was apparently short-lived, but a modified form of it that later succeeded through PI was the Doc Williams Guitar Course. As a long-time member of the WWVA Jamboree, Williams himself seldom worked under the PI system, usually being sponsored by Co-Co Wheats, a firm that paid a straight salary of \$125 weekly and allowed him to support his five piece band. However, he did make a series of short transcriptions advertising his guitar instruction books which first appeared in 1943. Played on several stations throughout



the northeast and as far south as North Carolina, the instruction books had sold some 120,000 copies in the first twenty years. They have remained in print to this day although sales in the last decade and a half have slowed to a virtual trickle.<sup>16</sup>

Lest one think that most PI activity took place on the smaller and medium sized stations, one might look at some gleanings concerning WSM Nashville's popular mid-day farm and country music program, "Noontime Neighbors," and their Saturday night "Grand Ole Opry." According to Robert Garver's book Successful Radio Advertising, a single sixty second announcement on the daytime program brought in some 7,063 while a baby chick offer on an Opry broadcast brought in 7,260 requests the first week. A seed catalog offer on one program resulted in 12,337 requests and over a six-week stretch Opry listeners wrote in for 29,721 bottles of tonic. Garver concluded that "whether the program is called Grand Ole Opry, Barn Dance, Jamboree, Roundup, or any one of a number of appropriate names" does not really matter but it does "indicate the kind of success participating sponsors can reap from it and similar shows in stations all over the country."<sup>17</sup>

As hillbilly deejay programs became increasingly popular and live performers slowly faded from the scene, the PI system moved into this format rather smoothly. Few major shows of this type inspire fonder memories among older fans than the WCKY Jamboree which broadcast nightly for many years its mail order offers featuring long-winded commercials of about five minutes for every two to three minutes of music. In a 1949 double-page ad in Broadcasting Magazine, WCKY's management painted a self image of major success. In 117 days of advertising the station had sold 4,143,100 baby chicks or an average of just over 35,411 chicks per night. During the same period they also sold 36,858 sets of auto seat covers; 9,274 business encyclopedias; 22,980 plant and fruit tree orders; and thousands of other products including song books, sewing kits and quilt patches. WCKY with their "fifty thousand watts of selling power" and their New York agents in the height of Fair Deal prosperity had come a long way from a system born in the dark days of depression price cutting. By contrast, back on March 19, 1938 at WMMN's "5000 watts of friendship," Cowboy Loye's 73 letters had topped the day's mail report but ranked a little behind "Radio Dot's" nineteen day monthly total of 2,320. During that time all the station's mail totals had averaged over 500 letters daily. The PI system had seemingly become another form of big business. In the smaller markets, some continuation of the older system remained. At WPDx Clarksburg, Cherokee Sue Graham, making the transition from live performer to deejay, got 500 letters a day each containing a Coco-Wheats box-top and a quarter for a child's belt buckle which had

cost them about 12½ cents. However, such means of livelihood would not last much longer. Sue eventually went on a set salary and her mandolin picking husband, Little John Graham became a master plumber.<sup>18</sup>

As late as 1952, the PI system still flourished with some occasional innovations being added. In May of that year Buddy Starcher made a series of five-minute transcriptions for the Allied Sewing Centers that were played on several Florida radio stations. By then, the emphasis was on telephone arrangements rather than mail orders;

#### ALLIED SEWING

Well, hello there my friend. Hope we find you well and happy at home and just enjoying a whole great big bushel of everything. This is your old pal Buddy Starcher bringing you one of the finest offers I reckon was ever made by any sewing machine company. You know, I want you to have a sewing machine and today I'm going to tell you about a brand new one you can have for only twenty-two dollars and fifty cents. Now that's a startling statement, but it's true and right after I sing this song, I'll tell you all about it. And now, "Missing in Action."<sup>19</sup>

A modern sophisticate might suspect that some gimmick or trick was hidden in this advertisement somewhere. According to Starcher, these sewing machines were indeed good ones, but rather small perhaps not much larger than a toy. During the home demonstrations, many clients would inquire about bigger models and the Allied salesmen more often than not would wind up selling them a larger and more expensive machine. So in a sense this commercial sold sewing machines albeit not necessarily the one discussed in it.

This might be as good a time as any to raise the question concerning fraudulent advertising and the PI system. Undoubtedly, some unethical practices flourished from time to time especially on the Mexican border stations where U. S. laws did not apply. Walter Bailes tells one of those apocryphal stories about "the guaranteed bug killer" in which customers would receive two small blocks of wood with instructions to press the blocks together firmly until the bug was crushed to death. Buddy Starcher contends that his father was indeed a victim of such a radio offer. No doubt many of the products so offered were not all they seemed to be, but this is hardly a unique situation in the history of American advertising. The late old-time fiddler Charlie "Big Foot" Keaton said that at Fairmont artists were warned to avoid making outlandish testimonials about the merits of products. One

day a young musician made such a claim and found himself being "chewed out" by a station official. Trying to rectify his standing the next day he went on the air and apologized to the audience and said that the stuff was no good at all. Needless to say the fellow got into hot water again. Carefully worded comments that allowed for exceptions were obviously the preferred type of advertising.<sup>20</sup>

By the early 1950s, changing times began to put the Pl system on the road to extinction. The rise of television and an increasingly more sophisticated audience soon made the system obsolete. It hung on for the longest in the all night deejay shows from localities like WWVA Wheeling, KXEL Waterloo, the Mexican border stations and taped or transcribed shows of folks like Don and Earl or the Phipps Family. When WWVA dropped this format in 1966 and converted the "Coffee Drinkin' Nite Hawk" Lee Moore into a modern deejay, it sounded the coming end of a chapter in hillbilly economics.

In conclusion, one might consider a 1950 recording of Grandpa Jones, a country artist whose career has weathered more than a half century of adjustments in the constantly changing world of show business. One of the most attractive features of hillbilly culture generally has been a capacity for self satire. Examples of this range from the Hoosier Hot Shot rendition of "Them Hillbillies are Mountain Williams Now" to many of the skits performed on Hee Haw. Jones in one of his King recordings satirized the Pl system as it was then being enacted on deejay programs like the WCKY Jamboree. The record label credited the song to three writers named Workman, Stutz, and Fouts, but it contains plenty of the characteristic Jones humor. Perhaps "Send in Your Name and Address" is as fitting a tribute as any to an economic innovation that, although exploitative and ethically weak in its worst excesses, played a major role in the sustenance and growth of country music for some two decades.

#### "SEND IN YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS"<sup>21</sup>

Now Me, I like good music, the kind that makes you  
sing  
Just plain old country music, it beats most anything  
So I switch on my radio to hear the latest hits  
After every record, this is what I get.

Send in your name and address, It's a \$1.98  
Just pay it to the postman at this very special rate,  
A dancin' doll and Hadacol, and tulip bulbs both  
big and small,  
Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98.

Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98,  
Just pay it to the postman at this very special  
rate,

Antifreeze and honeybees and compound known as  
Lydia-Eze  
Humidors, and cuspidors, and special wax for bath-  
room floors  
Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98.

Chorus:  
Don't send in your money but order right away  
This offer's only good in continental USA.

Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98  
Just pay it to the postman at this very special rate,  
Mixin' bowls and rubber soles and wire-glass that  
comes in rolls  
Famous little liver pills guaranteed to cure your  
ills  
Pots and pans, electric fans, and family insurance  
plans  
Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98.

Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98  
Just pay it to the postman at this very special rate  
A weather vane, an aeroplane, and books on how  
to entertain  
Cowboy boots, a gun that shoots, and Honolulu  
bathing suits  
A book of tricks and baby chicks and how to  
figure arithmetics  
A powder for mosquito itch, and a foolproof plan  
to make you rich  
Auto gaskets, laundry baskets, and the latest thing  
in fur-lined caskets  
Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98.

Chorus:  
Don't send in your money, but order right away  
This offer's only good in continental USA.

Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98  
Just pay it to the postman at this very special rate  
Fishin' hooks and doctor books, and new hillbilly  
picture books,  
Autographs and toy giraffes and albums for your  
photographs  
Plastic cars and Christmas stars and fruit and jelly  
cannin' jars  
How to sew and Vigaro and statues in the dark that  
glow  
Carpet tacks, and bric-a-bracs, and books that  
figure income tax  
Arthur Godfrey ukeleles, and pretty plastic green  
shillelaghs  
Send in your name and address, it's a \$1.98.

Chorus:  
Don't send in your money but order right away  
This offer's only good in continental USA.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Peter Morell, Poisons, Potions and Profits: The Antidote to Radio Advertising (New York: Knight Publishers, Inc., 1937), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Crazy Water Crystals presents the Crazy Water Gang (Electrical Radio Transcription found at WMMN Radio, Fairmont, W. Va.)

<sup>4</sup> James Harvey Young, The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicines in America before Federal Regulation (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 193-194; Ray Nemec, Blue Grass Roy's Collection of Mountain and Home Songs (backliner for Old Homestead LP OHCS 106, 1977). The commercial for Hamlin's Wizard Oil is found on this album.

<sup>5</sup> Herman S. Hettinger, A Decade of Radio Advertising (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933), pp. 168-169.

<sup>6</sup> Author telephone interview with John J. Bailes, Swainsboro, Georgia, April 14, 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Author interview with Buddy Starcher, Craigsville, West Virginia, May 2, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; Taped author interview with Buddy Starcher, Craigsville, West Virginia, May 14, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> from a transcribed program by Buddy Starcher, ca. 1949 (found in studio at WMMN Fairmont, W. Va.).

<sup>10</sup> from Charlie Monroe On the Noonday Jamboree, 1944, County LP 538 (taken from a 1944 radio transcription).

<sup>11</sup> Grandpa Jones, "I Remember When," in Country Music Who's Who, 1966 Edition. (Denver: Heather Publications, 1966), Part 8, pp. 32-33.

<sup>12</sup> Author Telephone Interview with Sylvia Curry Sheets, Morgantown, West Virginia, August 23, 1982.

<sup>13</sup> Pat J. Ahrens, A History of the Musical Careers of Snuffy Jenkins and Homer Sherrill (Columbia, SC: Wentworth Printing Co., 1970), pp. 11, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Starcher Interviews, May 14, 1978 and May 2, 1984. See also Buddy Starcher, "Red Belcher," Mountain Broadcast and Prairie Recorder, June 1945, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Author Telephone Interview with Ruth Stanford Roy, Mt. Savage, Maryland, June 6, 1982.

<sup>16</sup> Author Telephone Interview with Andrew Smik, Jr. (Doc Williams), Wheeling, West Virginia, January 3, 1984. See also Doc Williams, The Simplified "By Ear" System of Guitar Chords (Wheeling: Wheeling Music Co., 1943), passim.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Garver, Successful Radio Advertising (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1949), pp. 56-67.

<sup>18</sup> Broadcasting, May 23, 1949, pp. 42-43; Earl Northrup taped interview with Dusty Shaver, Oakland, Maryland, May 21, 1982 (copy in author's collection).

<sup>19</sup> Tape of transcription furnished by Buddy Starcher.

<sup>20</sup> Starcher Interview, May 2, 1984; Author Interview with Charles Keaton, Argillite, Kentucky, August 7, 1981. The comment by Walter Bailes is found on Early Country Radio: The Brandywine Festival 1979, Heritage LP XXX.

<sup>21</sup> "Send In Your Name and Address," King Record 934 (Reissued on Grandpa Jones Sings His Greatest Hits, King LP 554).



# LEWIS CROOK: LEARNING AND LIVING COUNTRY MUSIC

James E. Akenson

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## INTRODUCTION

Lewis Crook, a Saturday night regular with The Crook Brothers on the Grand Ole Opry since October, 1929, became socialized into the rural, family oriented Protestant culture of the South and absorbed the necessary values and skills to enjoy and perform traditional country music. Committing full-time to a variety of blue collar and low-level white collar jobs, Lewis Crook lived on the fringes of a new commercial country music. While never venturing into country music as a full-time career, Lewis Crook made brief, part-time forays into the commercial arena playing for square dances, school fund raisers, and concert packages promoted by the marketing techniques of the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II he lapsed back into a singular Saturday night appearance with The Crook Brothers on the Grand Ole Opry and occasional Opry-oriented television broadcasts. His enculturation into traditional, pre-commercial country music through interaction with family and kin, the decision-making process which prevented his entry into commercial country music on a full-time basis, and the socio-economic context in which his life and music have taken place make Lewis Crook a mirror to the face of country music history.

## RURAL MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Born 30 May 1909 to Lela Gertrude McKee and George Humphrey Crook, Lewis Crook entered the difficult life of middle Tennessee sharecroppers. In 1910, Trousdale County, Tennessee consisted of some 5,974 persons split between approximately 70% white and 30% black.<sup>1</sup> Typical of the rural South, the foreign born white or native offspring of the foreign born white comprised a minuscule (.4%) fraction of the population. Like many Southern counties, Trousdale County actually lost population from 1900-1910 as the emigration of blacks and whites resulted in a net population decline of 2.2%.<sup>2</sup> School attendance proved an opportunity for only 68% of white, and 61% of black children aged six-to-fourteen years.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, some 13% and 32% of the respective white and black population over ten years of age were illiterate. Totally rural, Trousdale County lay within the Nashville Basin

of the Eastern Interior Uplands and Basins characterized by rolling hills and valleys drained by the Cumberland River and punctuated by woodlands and small farms. Tobacco, corn, poultry and eggs far outstripped other forms of crop and livestock production.<sup>4</sup> Sharecroppers, including Lewis Crook's parents, operated 32% of Trousdale County farms, living a tenuous existence dictated by limited resources which placed tenants at the bottom of the social structure. Located some thirty miles northeast of Nashville, Trousdale County provided the archtypical setting in which traditional, non-commercial country music weaned itself into the daily lives of persons such as Lewis Crook.

## DAILY LIFE AND COUNTRY MUSIC

Daily life for a sharecropper's son meant that young Lewis Crook could count on a round of chores, a monotonous diet, and a social life oriented around friends and relatives in the immediate neighborhood. Rising with daybreak Lewis Crook fed mules, chopped corn, and hoed and stripped tobacco.<sup>5</sup> By age twelve Lewis was plowing ground with a team of mules in preparation for spring planting. Lacking strength to turn the plow around at the end of the furrow, Lewis relied upon the strength and knowledge of the mules to make the necessary turns. In a labor-intensive agriculture Lewis Crook provided George Humphrey Crook with a steady, dependable source of labor capable of off-setting his father's frequent disappearances, which made daily family life difficult. At the behest of his father Lewis quit school after the eighth grade to help generate family income working for George Humphrey Crook's sorghum mill. For feeding sorghum through the mule powered mill, hauling sorghum from the patches to the mill, and collecting the juice, the Crooks received every fifth gallon as payment for their milling service. It was never an easy task, and Lewis found himself getting "caught with a bunch of juice and worked into night by moonlight" on numerous occasions. A younger brother, Humphrey Lee Crook (named after Dr. Humphrey Bate of the Possum Hunters) and younger sisters Earlean and Willie failed to provide significant additional labor. Accordingly, Lewis "caught all the hardships" as there was "nobody else to do it."

Lela Gertrude McKee Crook also suffered, not having "much to say in nothing" concerning the decisions regarding family life. As wife and mother, Gertrude Crook dutifully prepared a monotonous diet for her family. Breakfast consisted of white slab bacon, oatmeal, and occasional eggs. Noon and evening meals included boiled beans, pork, and fried potatoes. Milk seldom entered the family diet as the Crooks rarely had a cow. Coffee was the usual beverage, giving way to sassafras tea in spring.

Many nights George Humphrey Crook took out the banjo and utilized skills taught to him by his brother Malone Crook. Using a two finger picking style George Humphrey Crook played a seemingly endless repetition of "Cotton Eyed Joe," "Tim Brooks," "Going Across the Seas," and "Tom Wilson" until Gertrude Crook "almost climbed the walls and then he'd quit." By age ten, Lewis took his father's banjo and began to teach himself the two finger, thumb-and-index-finger picking style. The self-taught Lewis thereafter began saving money to purchase a Sears-Roebuck mail-order banjo for \$9.95. If life proved difficult, music existed to ameliorate the conditions of daily existence.

Lewis Crook was further socialized into traditional country music through close family ties to Dr. Humphrey Bate Jr., leader of the Possum Hunters string band on the Grand Ole Opry. Uncle George J. and Aunt Sarah Jane Pruitt Crook not only rented the Cumberland River bottom land to George Humphrey Crook, but provided Dr. Humphrey Bate with a weekly noon custard each Monday. Dr. Bate visited his patients in the morning and then came by to visit "Aunt Sara" and enjoy his favored custard. Lewis often managed to be present at his aunt's for Dr. Bate's weekly custard visit. Dr. Bate picked the banjo upon occasion. Combined with numerous other contacts between the Bates and the Crooks, Lewis perceived Dr. Bate to be "just like family." Dr. Bate reinforced Lewis' musical interests and also provided a role model absent because of his father's behavior. Educated, prosperous, down-to-earth, stable, and devoted to traditional music Lewis came to view Dr. Bate as "my ideal." In following years Lewis would spend great lengths of time backstage with Dr. Bate at the WSM studios in the National Life and Accident Company building picking and discussing people and events back home in Trousdale County and nearby Sumner County.

Music entered the life of Lewis Crook in numerous other events within the social fabric of his immediate surroundings. Frequent gatherings of the Crooks, Dickensons, Pruitts, Carneys, and McKees took place in their respective homes.<sup>6</sup> Music was the source of entertainment as fiddle, harmonica, and banjo provided the opportunity

for the families to "sit around and listen" to the "Arkansas Traveler," "Soldier's Joy," "Grey Eagle," "Eighth of January," "Billy and the Low Ground," "Alabama Gals," "Tom and Jerry," and "Going Across the Sea." The same families also made social events, in which music played a key role, out of the spring floods of the Cumberland River. At such times, the rising river created small islands which provided an opportunity to kill and barbecue rabbits, make candy, play cards, and enjoy music. Throughout such socialization Lewis Crook found his musical tastes developed, reinforced, and given a performance outlet. Woven into the fabric of daily existence, music became integral to Lewis' tastes, attitudes, and habits. From such a process of socialization came the predispositions upon which Lewis Crook would act for a life time.

#### ADULT LIFE

Early in the twentieth century a variety of social forces changed the demographics of southern states. Both blacks and whites left the rural country and migrated to urban centers. Lacking the high school education he desired, Lewis Crook spent ages 14 to 17 dutifully helping the family scratch out a limited existence through sharecropping and working his father's sorghum mill. Like many compatriots in similar circumstances, Lewis found the prospects of continued existence at the sharecropper-poor farmer end of the social continuum to pale in comparison to possible employment in urban centers such as Nashville. Accordingly, in the summer of 1926 Lewis boarded a bus and moved to Nashville. He paid \$15.00 per week for room and board with his mother's sister, Aunt Willie Dixon, at 613 Boscobel St. Finding work with the Nashville Park Commission, Lewis worked five-and-one-half days each week at manual labor with pick and shovel. Upon being laid-off from his \$18.00 per week labor and finding no further employment Lewis migrated back to Trousdale County, where he resumed his dutiful help to his sharecropper parents from 1926 until 1929. By 1929 the continued precarious economic circumstances of the Crook family resulted in the entire family placing their belongings on a rented truck for a move to Nashville. After a house was rented at 620 North 2nd St., Lewis provided the only family income as George Humphrey Crook "did not work a lick." Finding work for a brief stint at Nave-Spiller Chicken Processors in North Nashville, Lewis pushed processed chickens into cold storage lockers. From 1929 to 1932 he found work at Carter Shoe Company finishing shoe bottoms for \$1.50 per day. Unfortunately, the 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. workdays proved erratic with two and three day work weeks dominating the Carter Shoe Company production schedules. While Lewis struggled making a living at Carter Shoe Company, the remainder of the Crook family



migrated back to Trousdale after eight months in Nashville. Back on rented land, George Humphrey Crook and family raised watermelons and corn.

Working in various blue-collar jobs and helping on the family farm allowed ample time and motivation to continue musical interests. Dr. Humphrey Bate knew of Lewis' two finger banjo picking and wanted him as a member of the Possum Hunters. The Possum Hunters own banjo picker played a "style all his own" which Dr. Bate felt meshed poorly with the rest of the group. Playing with Dr. Humphrey Bate at the 1927 Walter Hill, Tennessee, fiddler's contest, Lewis learned from Dr. Bate that he "didn't like the guy I have, but I hate to let him go." Given the rural, southern cultural tendency to avoid difficult decisions concerning face-to-face relationships Dr. Bate failed to dismiss the banjo picker. By the time the Possum Hunters had an opportunity to need a new banjo picker Lewis already occupied a niche as a member of the Crook Brothers. Lewis Crook thus failed to become a member of Dr. Humphrey Bate's famed Possum Hunters which helped provide the early Grand Ole Opry with a positive image and impact.

The 1927 Walter Hill, Tennessee, fiddlers' contest not only provided Lewis with an opportunity to play with Dr. Humphrey Bate, but provided the crucial contact for his eventual association with the Crook Brothers. While at Walter Hill, Lewis met Herman Crook, leader of the Crook Brothers who also was dissatisfied with the banjo picker of his group. Despite disliking the three finger picking style combined with chording far up the banjo neck, Herman Crook allowed the errant picker to remain in the Crook Brothers. Lewis did not receive an offer to join the Crook Brothers until some two years later. In the meantime, Lewis contented himself with playing a single 1927 appearance on the WSM Barn Dance (not yet coined Grand Ole Opry) with brother-in-law John Holder and Sid Harkreader performing "Old Joe," "Love Somebody," and one other unremembered number. The Crook (banjo), Holder (guitar), and Harkreader (fiddle) trio played a dance that same Opry weekend in Hermitage, Tennessee. Charging ten-cents for a three figure set, the trio supplemented their meager finances by some \$5.00 apiece for an evening's work. similar opportunities arose for the trio in schools in Barthelia, Beech Grove, Walter Hill, Dodson's Chapel, and Kittrell, Tennessee. In the fall of 1929, Herman Crook at last visited Lewis in his Nashville home to invite him to join the Crook Brothers. With the former banjo picker departed, Lewis began his Saturday night association with the Grand Ole Opry on the Crook Brothers' thirty-minute segment of the program.

Joining the Crook Brothers as a regular Grand Ole Opry performer supplemented Lewis' meager income by \$5.00 per week. Though a modest sum, outsiders "thought that was good pay at a time when \$1.00 a day for labor was standard pay." On the Crook Brothers' Grand Ole Opry segment the group played a variety of string selections such as "Soldier's Joy," "Sallie Goodin," "Eighth of January," "Tennessee Waggoner," "Fire on the Mountain," "Boil Them Cabbage Down," and "Chicken Reel." With Herman and Matthew Crook playing harmonica, Lewis Crook on banjo, Bill Etter on piano, and Clarence Minton playing guitar, the WSM audience heard a slightly different string band sound from most groups. With the Crook Brothers, Lewis not only picked banjo but did a considerable share of the vocals performed on the Grand Ole Opry. Accompanying himself on the guitar, Lewis sang an average of three vocals, including "Will The Circle Be Unbroken," "Blue Yodel No. 1," "Green Back Dollar," "Any Old Time," "Wreck of the Old 97," "Wreck of the Number 9," "Golden Slippers," "Green Valley Waltz," "Sleep Me in the Barn Tonight," and "Farther Along." Even after World War II and the advent of a star system, Lewis generated enthusiastic response with vocals on numbers such as "I Saw The Light." If the early Grand Ole Opry did not have a star system, the Crook Brothers at least were prominent musicians whose music and name reached large numbers of the WSM audience.

Visibility on the early Grand Ole Opry notwithstanding, Lewis Crook continued to live a precarious existence as the blue-collar migrant son of sharecroppers. In 1932, an opportunity to work for Jarman brought Lewis an \$18.00 per week pay check and steady work finishing shoe bottoms. If the Jarman work proved steadier and better paying than that with Carter Shoe Company, the same problem of limited finances continued to plague him. Now married as of 27 May 1932 to Clarice O'Dell Knight Crook, the added responsibilities of a wife and three step-children meant that any increased income quickly disappeared with increased expenses. Further supplements to the Crook family income continued to come from playing square dances in road houses such as the Germantown Inn near Whitehouse, Tennessee and Pappy Newman's on Ashland City Road. With Lewis on banjo, Odie Callas on fiddle, Golden Stewart on bass, and Jimmy Allen on rhythm guitar, a twenty-five cents admission charge and ten-cents per three-figure set charge for each person went into the coffers as Clarice Crook collected from patrons. The road house dances allowed the musicians, all Jarman employees, "to make some money so they could get by." By 1939 the group leased the Maxwell House Hotel ballroom for Saturday



night square dances, charging a \$1.00 admission plus ten-cents per set fee.

peep" and the parrot said, "peep peep, hell; take a damn good look!"<sup>11</sup>

Two additional forms of income-generating musical performances further supplemented the Crook family cash flow. Acting as his own agent, Lewis booked himself and a package of performers for school benefits and also performed as a member of Grand Ole Opry packages. Herman Crook disliked life on the road or performing for dances and would not allow the Crook Brothers to perform as a group. Keeping within driving distance of Nashville, Lewis booked his small package concerts for performances in middle Tennessee. In letters to school principals, Lewis outlined the benefits of a performance based on a 60%-40% performer-sponsor division of proceeds. Both parties could profit with thirty-five cent adult and fifteen-cent child admission charges. Establishing an account at Hatch Printing Company in Nashville, Lewis booked and promoted four performances using Hatch posters for Smithville and Alexandria (DeKalb County), Portland (Sumner County), and Hartsville (Trousdale County). (See Table 1.) Performed in theaters or courthouses the four concerts utilized from twenty-five to one-hundred posters to announce the performances. The December, 1938 appearance in Portland featured Lewis, Sid Harkreader, and John Holder. The 22 December 1939 Smithville and 23 December 1939 Alexandria appearances of Lewis were with Jack, Jim, and Red Anglian and Fiddling Floyd Ethridge. Oscar Stone of the Possum Hunters and Bert Hutcherson of the Gulley Jumpers joined Lewis for the 15 March 1939 and 10 October 1940 performances in the Hartsville Courthouse. Other school benefits took place in the school auditoriums of Mt. Pleasant (Maury County), Leoma (Lawrence County), and possibly several other long-since forgotten small towns.

A second form of performing came as Lewis Crook performed on package shows which he did not himself promote. School benefits included Lewis as but one member of a Grande Ole Opry oriented package designed to raise funds. At Central High School in Savannah (Hardin County), Tennessee, a Grand Ole Opry package included Lewis as well as Sam and Kirk McGee, Sarie and Sallie, and Arthur Smith.<sup>10</sup> A casual affair with performers milling about the auditorium stage, music mixed freely with country humor. Joe E. Pitts, then eight or ten years old, remembered both the music and the country humor.

. . . One of the jokes that Curt (sic) told was about a woman who had a parrot and a canary and she carried them every where she went, even to the bathroom while she took a bath and the little canary kept saying "peep,

Other wit included one female performer showing a second female a delicate handkerchief with an obvious delicate fragrance. "What's that?" "April in Paris" came the reply. The second female then produced a dirty handkerchief and allowed the first female to take a sniff. "What's that?" "Two nights in Waynesboro," (a rival town of Savannah) retorted the other. Played to a capacity audience, the Grand Ole Opry package provided the badly needed extra income for Lewis and the other performers. Such packages, booked through the WSM Artist Service, represented a first step toward the evolution of the roles of performers and professional support staff as separate entities.

Grand Ole Opry connections resulted in Lewis Crook performing as a member of Opry oriented casts playing standard promotional packages. On 30 June 1938 Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys performed in McKennzie, Tennessee with Lewis Crook, Slim Smith and the Arizona Wranglers, the John Daniels Quartet, and Happy Harold Barnes also on the venue. A second Golden West Cowboys performance on 18 June 1939 at Sam Davis Park near Pulaski, Tennessee included Lewis, the Andrews Brothers, the Fruit Jar Drinkers, and the Georgia Yellow Jackets. The Pulaski performance witnessed the hardships of performing at a time prior to interstate highways and tour buses. The Golden West Cowboys' elongated Chevrolet failed to negotiate the rain swollen, low-lying flood plain of one river, and a jeep was required to pull it through the water-covered road. With George D. Hay serving as master of ceremonies the Golden West Cowboys and supporting groups played to a "big crowd." The Grand Ole Opry reputation, supplemented by 100 Jumbo and fifty regular window promotional cards printed by Hatch Printing Company, served to draw rural middle Tennesseans to the event.<sup>12</sup> A final Opry package took place at Snead's Picnic near Corinth, Mississippi on 4 July 1940. Billing to the account of Mr. Roy Acuff, Hatch Printing Company printed 100 jumbo posters announcing the performance.<sup>13</sup> Besides Roy Acuff, Lewis performed with Happy Harold Barnes and the Cumberland Ridge Runners.

If Lewis Crook lived a difficult life during the depression of the 1930s it did not keep him from exerting a unique social influence within the Grand Ole Opry community. To some extent the oft-mentioned spirit of community and informality did exist among Grand Ole Opry cast members. Lewis participated in such community as he spent time backstage during Opry performances socializing at length with Dr. Bate concerning mutual friends and events "back home." More significantly, Lewis's outgoing manner lent itself to the establishment

of a tradition for Sunday afternoon socializing. Beginning about 1:30 p.m. Sunday afternoon, various Grand Ole Opry cast members would arrive at the Crooks' house at 208 Myrtle St. to socialize and sing. Arthur Smith, Uncle Dave Macon, the Delmore Brothers, the Anglian brothers, Avery Cantrell, Jess Harris, Moody Carrol, J. L. Frank, the Golden West Cowboys' Oral (Curly) Roades, Jack Skaggs, and Texas Daisy all came to the Crooks' modest rental home at one time or another. In addition, the Carolina Red Birds of Nashville radio station WSIX Country Store program frequently participated. During the Sunday afternoon sessions, talk gave way to music with impromptu performances, resulting in Myrtle St. neighbors gathered out on the curb to enjoy a free concert. Given the Crooks' precarious economic circumstances, Lewis and Clarice served no food or beverage, although some musicians enjoyed liquor which they brought themselves. Phone calls Sunday afternoon from Grand Ole Opry cast members would query "Anybody playing?" followed by Lewis's reply "Yeah. Come on out."

Lewis Crook further reinforced the Grand Ole Opry cast's sense of community in other ways. Not only did Zeke Clements, the "Alabama cowboy," occasionally attend the informal Sunday afternoon gatherings, but Clements also lived with the Crooks for an extended period.<sup>14</sup> Following a bout with typhus, Zeke Clements emerged from the hospital without funds and physically "the most pitiful sight you ever saw." Clements accepted the Crooks' hospitality while he recovered his strength and "moved in lock, stock, and barrel." Sleeping on a couch in the Crooks' living room, Clements paid no room and board until he recovered sufficiently to begin working. His stay lasted until it became necessary for Lewis to request his departure. The Crooks extended the Opry hand of fellowship far beyond the call of duty.

Lewis and Clarice Crook worked together to further the Grand Ole Opry spirit of community in their Sunday outings to Trousdale County. Never forgetting their family and friends in Trousdale County, Lewis and Clarice took Opry performers with them to spend a day in the country socializing, making music, and eating. Zeke Clements, Texas Daisy, Neal Smith, the Delmore Brothers, Oral Roades, and Arthur Smith all made the Trousdale County trip at some time. Clarice Crook developed a friendship with Texas Daisy as the two spent time backstage during Opry performances making arrangements for the various Opry cast members to accompany the Crooks to Trousdale County. George and Lela Crook greatly enjoyed the music and company of Lewis's Opry friends. Lela Crook prepared a "table fit for a king" including country ham, green beans, cabbage, boiled potatoes, and

dessert pies of egg custard, chocolate, or coconut. Washed down with tea and coffee, the country meal provided an ideal complement to the "all day long" socializing and country music making. In the modest parental sharecropper home, Lewis and his country music colleagues played out a simple communal drama which reinforced the values from which they, and country music, sprang.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s Lewis turned down two major opportunities to become a full time country musician. Both Roy Acuff and Bill Monroe offered him opportunities to become a member of their bands, the Smokey Mountain Boys and the Blue Grass Boys, respectively. Both men recognized what brother-in-law John Holder recognized. Lewis "really went over big" and there was "no doubt that he had the talent."<sup>15</sup> Clarice Crook "begged him to go with Roy," believing in Acuff's honesty and reputation for treating the Smokey Mountain Boys fairly. Having a steady job, however, overshadowed any lure to become professionally associated with either Roy Acuff or Bill Monroe. By 30 March 1942 Lewis continued his conventional search for economic security by joining the sales force of the National Life and Accident Company in his first white collar effort. Working a one square mile "debit" assigned as his territory in Nashville, his talent for meeting people provided increased income. Such considerations proved more important than Bill Monroe's statement in later years that "If this boy would have gone with me he would be on easy street."<sup>16</sup> Lewis Crook thus turned his back on entering country music as his primary source of income. In so doing Lewis opted to remain a peripheral actor in the evolving country music drama.

## WORLD WAR II

Country music passed a watershed as a result of the cultural forces accelerated by the advent of World War II. Millions of American soldiers were removed from their places of upbringing, brought together with men and women of vastly different attitudes, values, beliefs, and habits. Lewis Crook found himself interacting with New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut "Yankees" as he labored in the 43rd Infantry Division during the Pacific theatre of operations. At the same time, Lewis took his cultural baggage with him and spent a great deal of time performing country music to an audience initially indifferent or hostile to his cultural tastes. While caught up in events outside his control, Lewis aided the diffusion of country music as he provided desperately needed diversion from the mental and physical strain of combat.<sup>17</sup> Under combat conditions, the power of Lewis's country music exerted a greater impact than during peacetime. Upon the conclusion of World War



II, country music would continue an accelerated expansion unthinkable to Lewis at the time he declined invitations to join Roy Acuff and Bill Monroe. World War II itself, however, found Lewis participating intimately in the very forces that precluded his participation in the country music industry upon his return to civilian life.

On 25 January 1943 National Life and Accident Insurance Company<sup>18</sup> records listed Lewis Crook on military leave. Drafted into the United States Army, Lewis found himself at Fort Lee, Virginia as a member of the 43rd Infantry Division, an infantry unit destined to participate in heavy fighting throughout the Pacific campaign. Already blooded in heavy fighting at Guadalcanal, Lewis and other southerners like him provided replacements to the battle-tested division.<sup>19</sup> Attached to the 169th Infantry Regiment, Lewis began his performing while still at Ft. Lee, Virginia. One Captain Bashaw soon learned of his Grand Ole Opry status and began having Lewis perform for soldiers in the base hospital. Shipped to the Pacific theater, Lewis first engaged in combat as a member of the 169th Infantry Regiment on Munda in the New Georgia Islands. While on Guadalcanal to assist in mop-up operations, Lewis prepared to go out on patrol. Captain Bashaw informed him that because of his age Lewis would now be in the 43rd Infantry Division Quartermaster Corps. From Guadalcanal through the conquest of the Philippines the quartermaster corp provided less than the anticipated relief from actual combat conditions despite duties of cooking and loading transport. Never more than three miles from the front lines and often under fire, Lewis was provided with a legacy of nightmares from which he still must be awakened.

As the Pacific campaign progressed, Lewis Crook continued to bring country music to the audience of the 43rd Infantry Division. Performing in his tent with a small "hillbilly band" for personal enjoyment and those around him, the evening performances provided relief for a wide variety of soldiers. In the evenings Lewis gathered his collection of New Englanders, Southerners, and Mexican-Americans to play country music. With guitar (Lewis and Jose Barrera), mandolin, kazoos, accordian (Costello from Philadelphia), and percussion beat by spoons on steel helmets and buckets, country music retained its identity while given a previously unknown cultural amalgam. Fiddles and banjos could not stand up under the tropical humidity, yet the participants and willing by-standers found country music entering their lives. For John Grew of Vermont and Bob Jones of Terrytown, New York, the entertainment after mess became the "second thing to mail call." Under stress of combat, the gradual exposure to Lewis's even temper and his country music brought about a transformation

in tastes. As an urban New Yorker Bob Jones admits "country music wasn't my bag," but World War II turned Bob Jones into a country music "fanatic."<sup>20</sup>

North Carolinian James Curtis also served as a replacement for the blooded 43rd Infantry Division. Fortunate to be chosen from the 169th Infantry Regiment to serve temporarily as truck driver in the quartermaster corps, James Curtis met Lewis Crook quite by accident:

One evening late we had our tents set up. There wasn't much going on. There was a coconut grove and there were tents all through there. Of course the company street went down through the middle. There were tents on each side. One evening late I was walking down the company street. A friend of mine who was from Tennessee was with me and we were talking. I heard somebody singing and playing guitar. I said "Willie, who's that playing guitar?" "That's Lewis Crook." I said, "I don't know Lewis Crook." He said, "Did you ever listen to the Grand Ole Opry?" I said, "Sure, I did." He said, "Did you ever hear of the Crook Brothers?" I said "Sure, many times." He said, "Well, that's Lewis, he's one of them." So, we just walked on over to the tent where the music was coming from. And Lewis was in there sitting on a bunk and there was five or six people in the tent sitting around<sup>21</sup> there and he was entertaining them.

To James Curtis the nightly entertainment in the tents provided a great morale booster to himself and other troops. Prior to evening movies shown to the company, Lewis would get up in front of the assembled troops and entertain them with jokes and songs such as "T for Texas" (Blue Yodel No. 1), "Mule Skinner Blues" (Blue Yodel No. 8), "Sally Let Your Bangs Hang Down," and "Pistol Packin' Mama," as well as spirituals such as "Amazing Grace," "Peace in the Valley," and "Farther Along." While Curtis knew of Lewis's Grand Ole Opry connections, others such as Vermonter John Grew never realized Lewis's role in the emerging country music industry.

Lewis Crook further provided personal touches between his country music and the lives of soldiers in times of stress and special holidays. Packed in Landing Craft Infantry (LCI), soldiers of the 43rd Infantry Division waited off shore for their respective wave to move to the beaches for island assaults. In moments of silent, tense anticipation Lewis would take his guitar in hand and begin telling



his country stories and singing his country songs. Shortly, soldiers would be laughing, listening, and singing as they awaited their landing on the beaches. Religion and country music blended easily at Christmas time. Far from home, combat veterans found memories of intimate family experiences woven into a country music setting lead by Lewis Crook. "Silent Night," "Joy to the World," "Oh, Holy Night," and "Jingle Bells." Such singing in Christmas, 1944 seemed to be "a silent time, a religious time. . . it would do something to me. It made me feel real good." In such settings, Lewis deeply touched men as he performed his music and helped them cope with stressful, troubled times.<sup>22</sup>

Other audiences also found Lewis Crook providing them with a mixture of country music and country humor. Frequently, Lewis journeyed to other nearby companies to provide entertainment. At divisional entertainment, Lewis found himself beginning festivities by performing "two or three" numbers. Likewise, United Service Organization (USO) shows found Lewis as part of the scene, during breaks in the performances of major stars such as Bob Hope, Benny Goodman, and Joey Brown. During the Philippine campaign, James Curtis saw a USO show at Cabanatuan, some seventy miles north of Manila.

. . . I got to see one show that I remember. And I remember Bob Hope and I don't remember who else, maybe Lana Turner . . . We were stationed nearby. In between, when they would take a break or something, Lewis would get up and just take over. There'd be thousands of people and they would all be applauding. They really liked him. They liked his entertaining. . . they introduced him. . . with the Crook Brothers of the Grand Ole Opry. . . some member of the USO staff introduced him. He wasn't in uniform.<sup>23</sup>

As with nightly singing in the tent, Lewis continually performed country music in front of diverse audiences, helping transmit country music to a broader audience than it previously reached. Given his enthusiasm, humor, love of people, and performance qualities, the effectiveness of Lewis's role as a carrier and transmitter of country music was understandable. Combined with the stress conditions of combat, Lewis should not have been "amazed . . . them so-called Yankees loved country music."

#### POST-WORLD WAR II

After the Philippines campaign, the 43rd Infantry Division participated in no more fighting. Trained for the invasion of the Japanese home islands, an earlier-than-anticipated surrender allowed

the division to serve as occupying troops. Return to Nashville and Clarice Crook came in a series of anticlimactic steps. The final step, a bus ride from Ft. Smith, Arkansas brought Lewis home to Nashville with little fan-fare. Clarice Crook spent the war years working in a factory making service hats, sleeping fitfully near the radio, and watching out the window when War Department telegrams were delivered on Myrtle St. A phone call from Lewis in November, 1945 told her that her husband had arrived on a Trailways charter and would be out shortly in a cab. To Clarice Crook, World War II seemed to take a heavy toll. Separated from her husband for nearly three years, going as long as eight weeks without a letter, and finally having a husband with malaria for which he could not receive disability appeared to be a high price for victory. In her mind it "seems as if the war done something to everybody. Life hasn't been the same. It seems like there's a vacant place never filled in." Clarice and Lewis Crook paid dearly for the opportunity to assist the war effort and for Lewis to serve unknowingly as a carrier of country music to a wider audience.

Back in Nashville, Lewis Crook returned to a debit territory selling life insurance with the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. From 31 December 1945 through 12 April 1948 he worked an East Nashville debit consisting of too many "winos and prostitutes" to make the salary and commission worthwhile.<sup>24</sup> A brief effort at selling vacuum cleaners for Sears-Roebuck gave way to setting up display windows for Montgomery Ward from 1947 to 1951. Finding little salary or satisfaction, the Crooks moved from Nashville to purchase the William Crook homestead back in Trousdale County. Purchased in 1951 for \$4,000 with a \$1,000 down payment and the balance at 6% interest, this venture provided the Crooks with one more hazardous experience. Two years of drought made the return on tobacco, corn, two cows, and some brood sows barely sufficient to pay the mortgage interest. Drawing upon his personal acquaintances, Lewis entered the bank of Hartsville telling officer Ethridge Parker "Mr. Ethridge, I need you." An \$800 note and assumption by the bank for the mortgage left the Crooks paying a \$50 per month note which allowed successful retirement of the debt. Given the hazards of farming, Lewis returned to his shoe making skills to work for Texas Boot in nearby Lebanon. Beginning in 1953, Lewis worked for eighteen years and seven months finishing bottoms for the Jarman subsidiary. Starting at \$25 per week, Lewis was provided the stable income necessary to retire the farm mortgage.

Throughout the post-World War II years, Lewis continued to perform each Saturday night with the Crook Brothers on the Grand Ole Opry. As

new acts emerged to take their place on the Opry, the time allotted the Crook Brothers and their traditional string band music gradually shrank. By the 1980s Lewis found himself commuting Saturday afternoon to be at the Opry House by 6:00 p.m. A one-song appearance during each of the two performances means but a few minutes performance time shared with the clogging groups. While he is now paid at a weekly rate of \$250, a wage far greater than the \$5 at which he began in 1929, the role of the Crook Brothers and their traditional music has declined proportionately. Drums and electric amplification mesh poorly with the Crook Brothers' vision of country music and do not, as they see it, belong on the Grand Ole Opry stage. Be it by Ernie Ashworth, John Conlee, or Lee Greenwood, the performances include amplification and other devices very different from the style that gave life to the early WSM Barn Dance and Grand Ole Opry. Returning from World War II, Lewis led, and continues to lead, a restricted performing career. Augmented occasionally by appearances on Grand Ole Opry oriented television programs, his status in the structure of the contemporary country music culture remains static. Like his Trailways return to Nashville after World War II, Lewis's post-World War II performing career offers an undramatic, anticlimactic re-entry to those persons and things which he loves.

### CONCLUSION

Retired since 1971, Lewis Crook retains his ties with a musical form, his colleagues, and an institution through which he derives a significant portion of his identity. Talent and a flair for performance provided him with opportunities to join forces with established country music stars. Working for a Roy Acuff or a Bill Monroe might well have established Lewis Crook as a prominent musician and performer in his own right. But, reasoning that steady employment in a depression economy should not be lightly discarded, he opted for a safer course. That Lewis Crook's income would have been substantially higher appears likely in the hindsight of the history of country music. Whether he could have established himself as a major star is even more speculative. Socialized into a rural Tennessee sharecropping family with its web of family and friends creating music, Lewis Crook participated in the newly established commercial venture of country music. Moving between farm and city, between blue collar and white collar employment, and consistently living on meager resources, he reflected the demographics of the country music audience and performers. While never evolving

into a slickly packaged contemporary performer, Lewis Crook lived (and continues to live) with an ethical integrity. He participated in, and contributed to, the birth of a cultural form that enriched his own life and the institutions that nurtured him.



Lewis Crook. (Photo courtesy of James E. Akenson)

TABLE 1

Hatch Printing Company Account  
Nashville, Tennessee

Name Manager	Crook Brothers Lewis Crook 208 Myrtle St.	Permanent Address			
		Account No.	Sheet No. 1		
Folio	Date	Items	Itemized Debits	Total Debits	Credits
82514	Dec. 17, 1938	100 2 color 14x22 Cards Temple Theater, Portland Dec. 21 Picked Up	\$5.00	\$5.00	
*****	Feb. 4-39	Cash \$9.00 .....			\$5.00
82631	Dec. 14-38	50 Window Cards - 2 lots of 25 each Smithville Court House, Dec. 22 Alexandria Playhouse, Dec. 23	\$4.00	\$4.00	
*****	Feb. 4-39	Cash \$9.00 .....			\$4.00
63112	Mch. 8-39	50 Window Cards. Hartsville, Tenn., Court House March 15	\$3.00	\$3.00	
*****	Mch. 18-39	Cash .....			\$3.00
86596	Sept. 27-40	50 Window Cards. Court House. Hartsville, Tenn., Oct. 10	\$3.00	\$3.00	
*****	*****	Cash .....			\$3.00

## NOTES

1. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, Volume III Population. Nebraska-Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 760.
2. *Ibid.* p. 761.
3. The census defined an urban area as one consisting of 2,500 persons or more.
4. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, Volume V, Agriculture General Report and Analysis, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 796-797.
5. Interview with Lewis Crook, Castalian Springs, Tennessee, 29 May 1982. Other interviews included 7 January 1984 and 21 April 1984 as well as numerous telephone conversations and written correspondence.
6. Interview with John and Earlean Holder, 7 January 1984, Castalian Springs, Tennessee. (Mr. and Mrs. Holder live in Dr. Humphrey Bate's home.)
7. Correspondence with Mr. Joe B. Pitts of Savannah, Tennessee, 19 January 1984.



8. Lewis Crook, Sheet 1. In Hatch Printing Company files, 116 4th Ave. North, Nashville, Tennessee and on microfilm in the Country Music Foundation Library.

9. As people grow older memories tend to dim somewhat. It is entirely possible that Lewis Crook performed in several locations--both as his own promoter and agent and on part of Roy Acuff or Golden West Cowboys packages. The majority of the performances mentioned within the article have been validated through additional persons or sources other than Lewis Crook himself.

10. Interview with Mr. Joe B. Pitts, 17 April 1984.

11. Correspondence with Mr. Joe B. Pitts of Savannah, Tennessee. 19 January 1984.

12. Hatch Printing Company, Golden West Cowboys account. Sheet 11.

13. Hatch Printing Company. Mr. Roy Acuff account. Sheet . Interview with Mr. Louis C. Frank. Castalian Springs, Tennessee 7 January 1984.

14. The length of Zeke Clements' stay with the Crooks cannot be precisely stated. Zeke Clements indicated it to be "possibly a month." The nature of the evidence involved leads one to believe that Clements' stay lasted several months.

15. Interview with Earlean and John Holder. 7 January 1984. Castalian Springs, Tennessee.

16. It has not been possible to date to substantiate such job offers from either Acuff or Monroe. Both Lewis and Clarice Crook, however, consistently make the same assertions. Given the accuracy of other statements and collaborated evidence such job offers appear reasonable statements.

17. For a discussion of factors which could impact upon the cultural diffusion of Lewis Crook's music see John Keegan, The Face of Battle, (New York: The Viking Press, 1976). Various studies on combat indicate the force of small group interaction and support as crucial to the cohesion of a combat unit. Under stress conditions it would not be at all surprising to see "conversion" to enjoyment of country music take place.

18. Correspondence with Ms. Sara Roberts, Record Correspondent, The National Life and Accident Insurance Company. 16 December 1983.

19. John Miller, Jr., Guadalcanal: The First Offensive. The War in the Pacific. United States Army in World War II. (Historical Division, Department of the Army; Washington, D.C. 1949), p. 371.

20. Interview with Bob Jones of Cole Camp, Missouri. 17 April 1984. Interview with John Grew of St. Albans, Vermont, 8 April 1984.

21. Interview with John Curtis, Ellensboro, North Carolina. 14 March 1984.

22. James Curtis went to Lewis when troubled and found a willing listener who could help him forget problems of war by telling stories of the various Grand Ole Opry performers.

23. Ibid.

24. Correspondence with Ms. Sarah Roberts.

# GRAPHICS #66: BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD'S FIRST ALBUM

Archie Green

Fortunately, not all record collectors become discographers. To compile endless lists, to pore over labels for clues, to search for printed ephemera, to dig out obscure details -- indeed, these are endless tasks. Discography involves considerable grubbing by individuals as well as searching by teams of correspondents. I know of no researcher who works in full isolation. Rather, he engages in a group enterprise, building upon luck and toil in unusual combinations.

This feature focuses upon a minute discographical problem, yet unresolved, which has pulled together the wits of half-a-dozen investigators. I am concerned with the source of Bascom Lamar Lunsford's first ten-inch LP album, SMOKY MT. BALLADS (Folkways FP 40; subsequently FA 2040). This LP appeared in 1953 with a jacket cover sketch by Ben Shahn -- one of several works by the prominent artist offered to Folkways Records. Shahn's enigmatic sketch also graced the cover of an eight-page album insert brochure. (The cover is reproduced here in exact size.)

The Folkways brochure included eight song texts with head notes holding quotes by Lunsford; a foreword by Pete Seeger; an introduction by Frances Lynne; an afterword by Bertrand Bronson taken from his remarks at Lunsford's University of California concert, 21 March 1947. After purchasing the album when it appeared in San Francisco, I enjoyed it immensely. Like other enthusiasts, I knew of Bascom as "The Minstrel of the Appalachians," and the organizer, in 1928, of America's initial major folk festival at Asheville, North Carolina: The Mountain Dance and Folk Festival.

Regretfully, I never met Lunsford, although we corresponded when I undertook research on the term "hillbilly music." During March 1924, he had journeyed to Atlanta to record "Jesse James" and "Mole in the Ground" (OKeh 40155). I had been curious to learn what prompted Bascom's journey and to gain memories he retained about OKeh's Georgia expeditions.

During 1953, upon listening to Lunsford's first LP, I assumed that he had recorded eight songs for Moses Asch, the Folkways proprietor, in New York City. It never entered my mind that Bascom's album held any mystery, nor did I hear anyone question its source. As late as 1973, when Norm Cohen prepared a Lunsford discography for the JEMF QUARTERLY (Vol. 9, No. 29), Norm presumed that the Folkways selections came from a New York session, 1951-1952.

During 1975, Loyal Jones, at Berea College's Appalachian Center, completed a biographical manuscript on Bascom Lamar Lunsford. I had the pleasure of reading and discussing it with Jones and other mountain activists. My views of Lunsford's role need not be recapitulated. Rather, I urge readers to turn to Jones's MINSTREL OF THE APPALACHIANS. (Cover reproduced here.) Essentially, Bascom stood as a mediator between old and new ways in mountain life. His story continues to hold importance for students of American traditions.

Corresponding with Jones about his manuscript, in 1978, I suggested that he elaborate upon Lunsford's career as a recording artist. Bascom literally made the transition from wax cylinders, to acoustical and electrical 78s, to LPs. His full list of recorded folksongs staggers the imagination. I was especially curious to learn the circumstance of Lunsford's meeting with Asch. Both were highly intelligent and flamboyantly opinionated; they did not see eye-to-eye in political matters. How did they arrange an amicable agreement on recording and issuing SMOKY MT. BALLADS?

To examine this matter, Loyal Jones wrote to Pete Seeger (December, 1978) asking for his recollection of Bascom's Folkways session. Seeger had enjoyed the brochure-notes assignment in that he had long valued Lunsford's banjo style and ballad songbag. However, Pete had no specific knowledge of the session. Similarly, Jones quizzed Asch,

but the latter could dredge up no recording details. Jones then pursued the matter by telephone, calling Bertrand Bronson in Berkeley. Dr. Bronson shared memories of Lunsford's concert at the University of California, and suggested that Frances Lynne (a public relations specialist in Los Angeles) might have recorded Lunsford during his California trip, 1947.

Early in 1985, the Appalachian Consortium Press published Jones' biography of Lunsford. Jones reported those facts known to him about the Folkways album. The book also included several discographical lists without adding knowledge about the Folkways session. Fortunately, Jones had found a photo of a scrapbook page of eight Eagle labels for Lunsford's discs. Jones used this photo in the biography (page 35); it is also reproduced here.

This photo revealed new discographical vistas. On 23 April 1985, during a Nashville visit, I showed Jones' book to Bob Pinson at the Country Music Foundation. Pinson is well-known to JEMFQ readers for his superb skill in sound-recording research. True to form, on leafing through the book, Bob remarked casually that the Eagle labels corresponded exactly with the Folkways LP song selections. In short, Asch must have reissued the Eagle discs on LP without indicating source. With this as a starter, I dug out a few facts on Lunsford's Eagle 78s.

To begin: the Eagle labels "found" by Jones are pasted on a scrapbook page. Someone (unknown to me) pasted these labels alongside a typed text which describes a recording session on Monday, 14 April [1947]. The typescript author mentions Lunsford's ease at the session, and names engineers Ralph Auf der Heide and [?] Simon. Also, the text reports that assistant Lynne in the studio took notes on Bascom's singing for future use in an Eagle album.

Because of the difficulty in reading the typewritten copy in the facsimile reproduced here, I give the text below:

*Monday-April 14-10:00 a.m.*

*This was one of the hottest days of the year, but providentially the recording studio was cool. So was folk singer Lunsford, to whom recording is no new story. He sailed*

*through his program with a minimum of difficulties, only one or two "fluffs" and came out even on his timing. Ralph Auf der Heide officiated at the controls, with technical man Simon, both of them very good. They used three "mikes", one set low, and close to the banjo, one immediately in front of the singer, and one several feet back of that, to serve as an "echo chamber." Padding was placed under the artist's chair, so that the essential foot tapping might be muffled! Audience consisted of assistant Lynne, who took notes on the words, to be checked against the records later.*

#### SONGS RECORDED

*Swannanoa Tunnel  
Jinnie Jenkins  
On the Banks of the Ohio  
Death of Queen Jane  
Mr. Garfield  
Little Marget  
Springfield Mountain  
Mole in the Ground*

*(Banjo Accompaniment)*

*Biographical sketch and test of songs to be printed on inside covers of album, with decoration of the Lunsford family coat of arms and likeness of Sir Thomas Lunsford, ancestor of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, who established the American branch of the family in 1649, in Virginia.*

Jones found this unusual page among the papers in the huge Lunsford collection at Mars Hill College Library, North Carolina. Librarian Lewis Miller does not know who composed or pasted up this particular page. Nor does Mars Hill have the Eagle discs. Does any reader have a clue? The labels could have been mailed to Bascom by Frances Lynne, Ralph Auf der Heide, or someone else at Eagle. The page's lower right-hand corner reads "Ralph -- with babies -- Norio and Eric." Presumably, Auf der Heide had sent a family photo to Bascom. Possibly,



Lunsford or his daughters compiled the scrapbook, placing Ralph's family picture next to the Eagle labels.

To home in on the 14 April session, I checked the U.C. student paper, THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN (Friday, 21 March 1947) which announced a Lunsford recital in Wheeler Hall auditorium that evening. I assume that Frances Lynne came to the concert with Lunsford. She may have taken notes on Dr. Bronson's spoken introduction. If Lynne was not present, she may have obtained a copy of his remarks by correspondence. Further, I assume that Lynne sent Bronson's remarks to Asch at the time he edited the album brochure for SMOKY MT. BALLADS. (Alternately, Bascom could have given or mailed Bronson's remarks to Asch.)

It seems reasonable to believe that Lunsford had traveled from Berkeley to Los Angeles for a concert at UCLA about the time of his session in Eagle's Hollywood studio. (I have yet to check the UCLA paper for a confirming date.) Seeking additional leads, I turned to Joe Hickerson at the Library of Congress. He indicated that Ralph Auf der Heide had met Lafe Todd and Bob Sonkin, during 1941, while they collected migrant farmworker songs in California's San Joaquin Valley. In 1945, Ralph corresponded with Ben Botkin, then chief of the Archive of American Folk Song, sending him a list of key records held by San Francisco radio station KLS.

On 15 October 1947, Auf der Heide wrote to Botkin's successor, Duncan Emrich, reporting that he had recorded Bascom for Eagle in Hollywood, but that the firm had since gone broke. Consequently, Eagle had not yet issued the Lunsford 78s. Ralph noted, "It was one of the best master sessions I have ever conducted, thanks to Mr. Lunsford's excellent showmanship and cooperation." Accordingly, Auf der Heide sent dubs of the Eagle recordings to Emrich for Library of Congress deposit. These were accessioned in the Archive as 9124-9125 during November, 1948. I do not know whether anyone in the Archive, after 1953, correlated these Hollywood dubs with Asch's Folkways album.

It would be appropriate to round out this discographical report with a firm statement on how and when Asch received Lunsford's Eagle discs, if indeed he did. Seemingly, the actual records, or dubs, could only have been carried to New York

by Lunsford, himself, Frances Lynne, or Ralph Auf der Heide. I have never seen the Eagle recordings. Possibly, the firm never issued the discs after the labels were printed. Asch might have worked from acetate or tape dubs of the Eagle masters. I shall be pleased to hear from any collector who has information on these exceedingly rare 78 rpm records.

Further, I shall be interested in learning something of the careers of Frances Lynne and Ralph Auf der Heide. Surely, one or both of them would have been involved with Moses Asch in 1952 or 1953. How else can we account for Lynne's comments in the Folkways brochure? Here, I offer belated thanks both to Lynne and Auf der Heide for their work with Lunsford back in 1947.

I close this graphics feature with a respectful salute to Bertrand Bronson, who died in Berkeley on 14 March 1986. I have marveled at his ballad scholarship for five decades. Fortunately, the brochure notes for SMOKY MT. BALLADS retain a bit of Dr. Bronson's spirit. In talking to Lunsford's college audience Bronson saw folksong as a key to "our common humanity," a "touchstone ... back to our common center." These were good words in 1947; they remain strong, today.

Those who cherish Appalachian music know much of Bascom Lamar Lunsford's contribution. He remains open to new audiences by virtue of his many field and commercial recordings. Moses Asch has kept Bascom's Folkways album on the market since 1953. This LP holds "Mole in the Gound," a fascinating song which notes a tiny creature's power to root down mountains. Discographers, too, dig and root, seeking humanistic sustenance.

With fellow discographers, I assert that a discrete item revealing an album's source holds scholarly importance. Conscious that I have resolved no earth-shaking problem within this feature's scope, I have displayed the mutual dependence of record collectors and folksong scholars. As well, I have offered tribute to Bertrand Bronson, Moses Asch, and Bascom Lamar Lunsford -- giants in the interpretation of the American scene.

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album FP 40

Copyright 1953 by Folkways Records & Service Corp. 117 W. 46 St. NYC USA

# SMOKY MT. BALLADS



**SUNG BY BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD WITH BANJO**

SWANNANOA TUNNEL • MR. GARFIELD • JENNIE JENKINS  
LITTLE MARGARET • ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO • SPRINGFIELD  
MOUNTAIN • THE DEATH OF QUEEN JANE • MOLE IN THE GROUND

FP 40 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP., N. Y. 36

# ALBUM RECORDING - EAGLE RECORDS

WEDAY-APRIL 14- 10A.M.

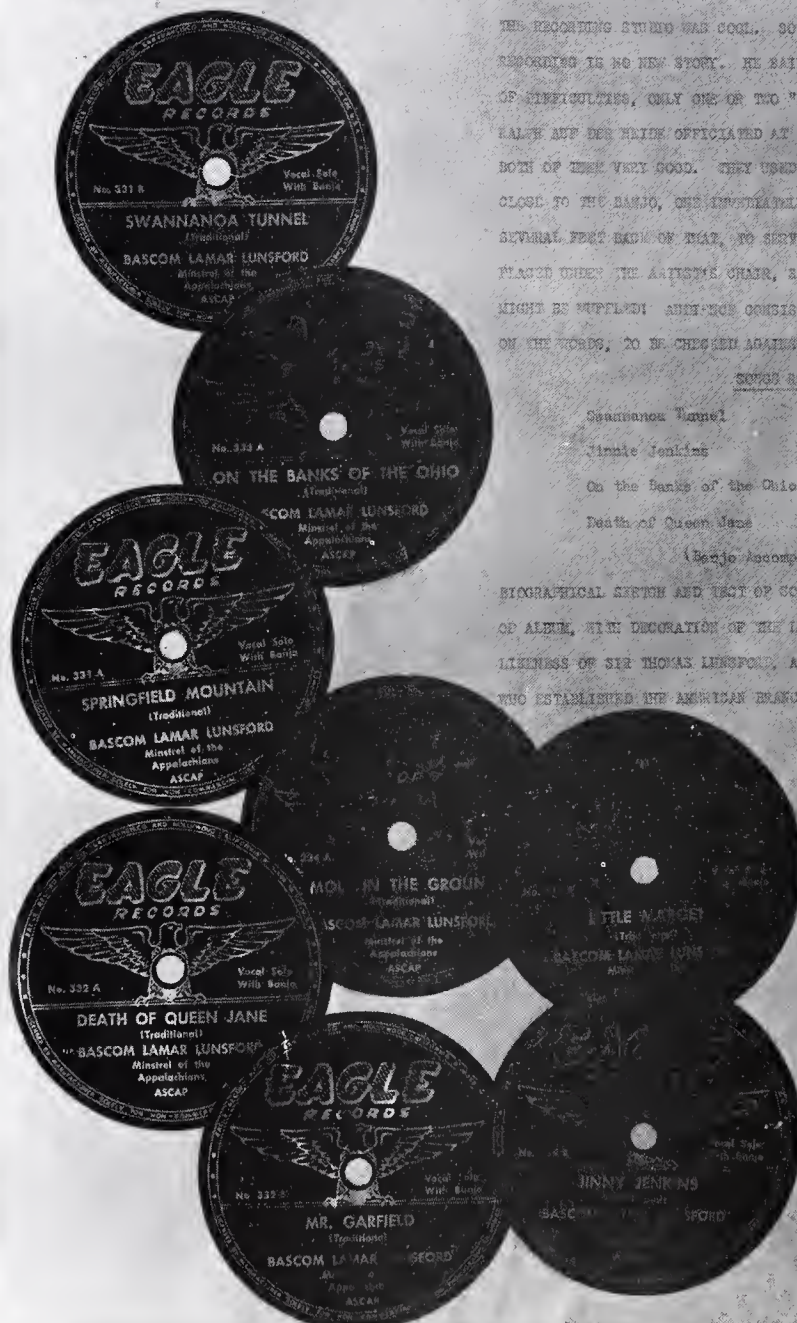
THIS WAS ONE OF THE HOTTEST DAYS OF THE YEAR, BUT PROVIDENTIALLY THE RECORDING STUDIO WAS COOL. SO WAS FOLK SINGER LUNSFORD, SO WHEN RECORDING IS NO NEW STORY. HE SAILED THROUGH HIS PROGRAM WITH A MINIMUM OF DIFFICULTIES, ONLY ONE OR TWO "FLIPS" AND CAME OUT EVEN ON HIS TIMING. LALIE AND HER WIFE OFFICIATED AT THE CONTESTS, WITH TECHNICAL MAN SIMON, BOTH OF THEM VERY GOOD. THEY USED THREE "TRICKS", ONE SET LOW, AND CLOSE TO THE BASSO, ONE IMMEDIATELY IN FRONT OF THE SINGER, AND ONE SEVERAL FEET BACK OF THAT, TO SERVE AS A "MICRO-CHANGER." FADWAC WAS PLATED UNDER THE ARTIST'S CHAIR, SO THAT THE ESSENTIAL FOOT TAPPING MIGHT BE SUPPLIED. ASSISTANCE CONSISTED OF ASSISTANT LYNN, WHO TOOK NOTES ON THE WORDS, TO BE CHECKED AGAINST THE RECORDS LATER.

## SONGS RECORDED

Swannanoa Tunnel	Mr. Garfield
Jinnie Jenkins	Little Marget
On the Banks of the Ohio	Springfield Mountain
Death of Queen Jane	Hole in the Ground

(Banjo Accompaniment)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND TEXT OF SONGS TO BE PRINTED ON INSIDE COVERS OF ALBUM, WITH DECORATION OF THE LUNSFORD FAMILY COAT OF ARMS AND LIKENESS OF SIR THOMAS LUNSFORD, ANCESTOR OF BASCOM LAMAR LUNSFORD, WHO ESTABLISHED THE AMERICAN BRANCH OF THE FAMILY IN 1649, IN VIRGINIA.



*Mentioned above*

ALBUM - WITH EARLY -  
WORLD AND ERIC



# *MINSTREL Of the APPALACHIANS*



*The Story of  
Bascom Lamar Lunsford*

*by Loyal Jones*

---

# "JUST LET ME HEAR SOME OF THAT...": DISCOGRAPHIES OF FIFTY CLASSIC ROCK ERA PERFORMERS

B. Lee Cooper

Numerous biographies examining the personal lives and performing activities of popular singers have been published since 1980. The subjects of these studies include blues guitarists Michael Bloomfield and B.B. King, British rock groups the Rolling Stones and the Who, contemporary country singer Waylon Jennings, classic country and western songsmith Hank Williams, pop song writer Neil Sedaka, and the ever popular crooner Frank Sinatra.<sup>1</sup> New books are currently being compiled on artists such as Elvis Presley, Neil Diamond, Carl Perkins, and Barbra Streisand. As increasing numbers of music fans, rock journalists, and scholars search for recorded resources by individual performers, discographies are becoming more and more significant as historical research devices.

American interest in discographic study during the early 1970s focused primarily on jazz performers, with only a few rock era artists included. Only specialized fan club members and lyric-oriented scholars were investigating albums by Bob Dylan, the Beatles, and other poetic vocalists. By 1979, however, a variety of general rock record and album lists began to appear. There was also an unmistakable sense among writers that the period from 1955 to the present was both historically relevant and musically distinctive. The 1980s explosion of autobiographical and biographical studies, together with a geometric increase in published discographies, can be documented in a variety of musical genres. These fields include blues (Billie Holiday, B.B. King, Jimmy Reed, Koko Taylor, and Muddy Waters),<sup>2</sup> country (Chet Atkins, Johnny Horton, Waylon Jennings, Ernest Tubb, Conway Twitty, Hank Williams, and Hank Williams, Jr.),<sup>3</sup> folk (Joan Baez, the Kingston Trio, and Phil Ochs),<sup>4</sup> jazz (Louis Armstrong),<sup>5</sup> novelty (Spike Jones and Tiny Tim),<sup>6</sup> pop (Frankie Laine, Patti Page, Johnny Ray, and Frank Sinatra),<sup>7</sup> reggae (Toots and the Maytals),<sup>8</sup> rhythm and blues/soul (James

Brown, Sam Cooke, Louis Jordan, Otis Redding, Smokey Robinson, and the Temptations),<sup>9</sup> and rock (Jackson Browne, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, Queen, and the Ramones).<sup>10</sup> It is also intriguing to note that the role of "discographer" has led to increasing prestige for several audio archivists such as Ken Clee, Fernando Gonzalez, George Moonoogian, and Ray Topping. The 1983 publication of Michael H. Gray's Bibliography of Discographies -- Volume 3: Popular Music signaled the culmination of fifteen years of growing research commitment to rock era discographic study.<sup>11</sup>

The following pages provide discographic references on fifty (50) classic rock era performers. Although the selection of these artists is admittedly arbitrary, the criteria utilized for consideration were consistent: (a) each performer has at least five years of hit recording experience since 1955; (b) the songs, performing style, or instrumental skill of the artist has been dramatically influential in rock era music development; (c) each singer or group is noted for performing in the fields of rock 'n' roll, rockabilly, rhythm 'n' blues/soul, or rock/pop music; and (d) the performer is frequently the subject of interviews, articles, or books. This reference information is designed to assist current discographic researchers and future biographers to locate recorded resources by prominent rock era performers.

## FOOTNOTES

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# RECORD REVIEWS

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The different roles played by books and sound recordings in our society are intriguing. After having more than a century to assimilate the sound recording into our culture, we still have difficulty taking records as seriously as books. This is not to say that recordings are exclusively intended for entertainment--by no means. Religious records of various sorts constitute a major portion of the business. But what has, until relatively recently, been practically absent is the utilization of sound recordings as pedagogical tools by academic institutions. How many university presses and other academic publishers have phonograph record divisions of any consequence? Happily, this state of affairs seems slowly to be changing. The first three albums reviewed below are published by university or college agencies. The fourth is produced by a college but issued by a private company. The fifth and sixth are issued by another relatively new phenomenon, the state folklife agency. It is interesting to note that all but one of these are devoted entirely to Afro-American music--a distribution which is not atypical of the larger body of phonograph records produced by such institutions. I am tempted to conclude that we are seeing the same cultural biases that caused printed scholarship related to blues and jazz to precede similar studies in hillbilly music by close to two decades.

**VIRGINIA TRADITIONS: VIRGINIA WORK SONGS** (BRI 007, Blue Ridge Institute, Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va.; 1983). 17 worksongs, 6 recorded by John and Alan Lomax in 1936; 9 by Glenn Hinson in 1979-80; and two in the 1950s off the New Jersey coast. *On a Monday; Oh Lord They Don't 'Low Me to Beat 'em; Biting Spider; The Man Was Burning; Can't You Line 'em; The New Burying Ground; Evalina; Drinking of the Wine; Every Mail Day; Lazarus; Sleep On; Come Along Down; I'm Not Paying for Them Singing; On My Way to New Orleans; Wade in the Water; I Don't Want Nobody Stumbling Over Me; Sit Down Servant.* Includes 36-page illustrated booklet with survey essay on worksongs, text transcriptions, and notes on the recordings, by Glenn Hinson.

This is the seventh album in the Blue Ridge Institute's impressive series, and it maintains the high standards of its predecessors. The material falls into three groups. Five selections are group worksongs recorded by the Lomaxes in state penitentiaries or prison farms. Most are variants of songs that have been recovered elsewhere. The sixth recording the Lomaxes made for the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song is an unusual and moving religious narrative about a gambler who blasphemed God and was set afire on a log from which he could not be freed. The two 1950s recordings are menhaden fishing shanties by black, mostly Virginian crewmen, made under actual work conditions (which accounts for their rough acoustical quality). The more recent (and much better-recorded) selections by Hinson include another menhaden shanty by former crewmen; a song by a group of women cracking crab-shells; two shipcaulking chants and one memorate; and three religious songs by various groups of oyster shuckers. Such examples as "Wade in the Water," sung over the sound of cracking oyster shells, illustrate a problem in identifying work songs by their lyrics alone, many of which have no textual reference whatever to the work underway. This is because most definitions of "work song" include songs whose only function vis-a-vis the work situation is to relieve boredom or cheer the spirits. Any song could conceivably serve this purpose; hence, there is nothing intrinsic in the nature of the song itself that establishes it as a worksong; only the question whether it has actually been used to accompany work. Hinson's survey essay is a good general introduction to the subject of Afro-American work songs, especially as sung and collected in Virginia.

**EIGHT-HAND SETS & HOLY STEPS: Traditional Black Music of North Carolina** (Cross-roads C-101; No. Carolina Museum of History; 1978). 21 field recordings (made in the 1970s?) by Glen Hinson and/or Charles Ellerston. James "Guitar Slim" Stevens: *Wildwood Blues Speak, Your Close Friend*; Elizabeth "Babe" Reid: *Corrina*; Odell and Joe Thompson: *Georgia Buck, Going Downtown*; Roosevelt May: *Breakaway, Swing Low Sweet Chariot*; Cora Phillips & Elizabeth Reid: *John Henry*; Algia May Hinton: *Buckdance, Honeybabe, Chicken Lord Lord, Sweet Home*; Percy Lassiter: *Chicken, Boll Weevil*; Elester Anderson: *Out on the Farm*; 2nd St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church: *When You See Me Praying*; Thomas Burt: *Lord What Shall I Do*; Rev. Rassie Moore: *Death is Coming Back After You*; 2nd St. Paul Jr. Choir: *Satan We're Gonna Tear Your Kingdom Down*; Badgett Sisters: *Traveling Shoes*; Gospel Jubilators: *Joshua*. Annotated and produced by Glenn Hinson. Issued as part of a museum exhibit titled "The Black Presence in North Carolina." (For sale by Museum Sales Shop, 109 E. Jones St., Raleigh, NC 27611; \$4.50 + \$1.00 p&h.)

This is one of a handful of albums of field recordings issued in the past dozen years that demonstrates that the 19th century pre-blues black musical traditions still survive in parts of the south--but just barely, judging by the ages of most of the performers. Side I is devoted to secular music: reels and ragtimey pieces typically heard at local dances. One unusual piece is Stephens' spoken toast, which opens the album. Elizabeth Reid and Cora Phillips are cousins from a musical family of Caldwell County that has been represented on previous LPs (the excellent fingerpicking guitarist, Etta Baker, is Cora's sister). Another fine guitarist in the same style as Baker's, though from the other side of the state in Johnson County, is Algia Hinton. Hinton sings also, which Baker and her cousins rarely do on records. Her "Chicken, Lord, Lord" seems to have fragments of "Railroad Bill" embedded in it. Side II, devoted to sacred music, presents a variety of styles from solo vocal/harmonica or vocal/fingerpicking guitar to church choral singing. But as Hinson observes in his notes, these are pre-gospel era hymns and spirituals, chosen, like the examples of Side I, to demonstrate the survival of older musical traditions. The album's layout--contents listed on the outside back jacket with notes on both the two inner sides of a double jacket and also on both sides of the inner sleeve--shows a wise compromise between the usual limitations of a single jacket text and the much costlier booklet insert.

**BIRMINGHAM BOYS** (Alabama Traditions 101; University of Alabama, 1982). Nineteen selections by five jubilee gospel quartets from Jefferson County, Alabama, recorded 1980-82. Sterling Jubilee Singers: *When They Ring the Golden Bells, 'Low Down Chariot, John Prayed Out on the Island, I Won't Have to Suffer*; Shelby County Big Four: *Steal Away, Lord Lay Me Down, Don't Let It Be Said*; Delta-Aires: *Lord I Come To Thee, Don't Want to Get in that Fire, Just a Little Talk with Jesus*; Four Eagle Gospel Singers: *Go Where I Send Thee, It Was Alone, There Must Be a City, When Folks Around You Prosper, Jesus Is All this World To Me*; Ensley Jubilee Singers: *We'll Understand It Better By and By, On Mount Olive's Sacred Brow, I'm A Pilgrim, People Don't Sing Like They Used To Sing*. Includes 20 page illustrated booklet by Brenda McCallum, Ray Funk and Horace Clarence Boyer with historical background, biographies, notes on the styles and techniques; and on the songs themselves, with text transcriptions and discographic references.

During the second quarter of this century Birmingham, with the surrounding Jefferson County, Alabama, was established as a major center of black gospel quartet singing. Although nationally, the style began to decline in the 1950s, partly because of the influence of contemporary black pop "soul" singing, quartets (which did not always consist of exactly four singers) retained much of their popularity in the Jefferson County region. This album presents five quartets from the area, most of which have been singing since the 1940s or earlier. All the groups consist of six to seven singers; only the Ensley group has instrumental accompaniment--an unobtrusive guitar and bass guitar. Boyer's informative notes on the individual selections draw attention to the stylistic nuances, thereby greatly enhancing the listener/reader's appreciation of the music. The stylistic range presented is considerable, from the older "sweet" sound of the early quartets, exemplified by "Steal Away," to the "hard" gospel of "We'll Understand It Better By and By". The package also includes a smaller 20-page Birmingham Quartet Scrapbook, prepared by Doug Seroff for a 1980 Birmingham concert; a handsome and informative souvenir, though its relation to the album and primary booklet is nowhere explained. (The connection seems to be that both were funded by the Alabama State Council on the Arts and Humanities.)

**YONDER COME DAY: Note Singing And Spirituals From South Georgia** (Front Porch Records 79-001; 1979). Spirituals and hymns recorded in four black communities in 1977-78 by Beverly Robinson, Carl Fleischhauer and Tom Adler; Andrea and Dennis Coelho. *I'm Not Ashamed On My Lord*, (opening prayer), *Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit*, *Inside the Pearly Gates*, *Where Could I Go But To the Lord*, *My Lord Will Welcome Me There*, *Buckle Up My Shoe*, *Walk in Jerusalem*, *Yonder Come Day*, *All These Years Lord*, *Come By Here M'Lord*, *Run Sinner Run*, *May God Be With You* (closing prayer). Produced and edited (and back jacket liner notes) by Dennis Coelho.

Earlier in this century, throughout the rural south, great singing conventions would meet at periodic intervals. Small, local ones met frequently, culminating in state-wide ones and even, after the mid-1930s national ones, some lasting two or more days. A major social event in the community, the conventions were an important source of entertainment when movies, radio, and other more modern media were still scarce; they were also an impetus to a flourishing publishing business, since each year's conventioners looked forward to learning new songs to take back to their local churches and communities. Such singing conventions are far fewer today than they once were, but they have not vanished. In south Georgia where these recordings were made, they are held quarterly, moving from church to church throughout the district in orderly rotation. These selections are for the most part well-recorded, and the singing is good; the documentation is minimal, consisting only of a general back-jacket essay. The music represents several distinct styles, including a lined-out hymn, three (seven-note) shaped note selections, and a few more modern gospel-tinged examples. Though this record is issued by a commercial company it was produced by the Arts Experiment Station of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College of Tifton.

**DROP ON DOWN IN FLORIDA: Recent field recordings of Afro-American Traditional Music** (Florida Folklife LP 102-103; Florida Folklife Program; 1981). Two-LP set of 27 selections recorded 1978-80 by Dwight DeVane, Peggy A. Bulger, Brenda McCallum, Stephen McCallum, and Doris J. Dyen. Emmett Murray: *Mobile Blues*, *I'm Gonna Dig Myself a Hole*, *She's a Fool She Ain't Got No Sense*, *Old-Time Rounders*; Moses Williams: *Rolling and Tumbling*, *Sitting on Top of the World*, *Which Way Did My Baby Go?*; Richard Williams: *Old Forty*; Robert Dennis: *Early One Foggy Morning*, *Boogie*; Willie Gillard: *Polk County Blues*; Ella Mae Wilson and Richard Williams: *Polk County Blues*, *Careless Love*; Testarina Primitive Baptist Church: *I Don't Know What I'd Do Without the Lord*, *Prayer*, *Did Christ O'er Sinners Weep?*; Southeast Alabama and Florida Union Sacred Harp Singing Convention: *The Old Ship of Zion*, *The Florida Storm*; Florida-Alabama Progressive Seven-Shape Note Singing Convention: *Inside the Pearly Gates*, *God's Gonna Set the World on Fire*; Ella Mae Wilson, Lillie B. Williams & Richard Williams: *Motherless Childres*, *Do Lord Remember Me*, *Trial and Judgment*, *When the Saints Go Marching In*; Johnny Brown: *That's All Right*, *Precious Lord Take My Hand*; Miccosukee Church of God of Prophecy: *Altar Call*, *Prayer*, *He Set Me Free*. 24-page illustrated booklet with introductory essay by Dwight DeCane; song headnotes, with text transcriptions and discographic as well as printed references, by DeVane, Brenda McCallum, and Doris J. Dyen. (Issued by Florida Folklife Program, P.O.B. 265, White Springs, Fla., 32096).

Noting that there has been little if any fieldwork documenting traditional Afro-American music in Florida since the work of Hurston, the Lomaxes and a few others in 1927-42, the editors of this album state its purpose is to present sacred and secular music surviving among older, rural blacks in the state. This is done in two LPs, the first devoted primarily to blues songs--vocals accompanied by 6-string, electric or acoustic, or 1-string guitar; the second, to spirituals, hymns, gospel songs, shape-note songs, and quasi-religious songs (such as "Motherless Children") by church groups, singing conventions, or small family groups of one to three performers. Musically, the sacred performances tend to be stronger than the secular ones, which are rendered by performers ranging in age from 59 to 91. The handsomely laid-out brochure provides all the essential information; but some matters of documentation are puzzling. For example, the list of LP recordings includes many nowhere mentioned in the notes, yet omits several that are. The citations of printed references could have been more useful if page numbers had been included. The lists of related recordings are very selective--yet no principles of selection are given. Presumably all versions by white artists were deliberately omitted.



**FLORIDA FOLK FESTIVAL: THE FIRST 25 YEARS (1953-1977)** (Florida Folklife LP 101; 1981). 16 selections, spoken and sung, recorded at Florida Folk Festivals between 1954 and 1977. Annie Tomlin: *Brother Rabbit and the Tar Baby*; Lem Griffis: *The Bullet*; Skipper Locket: *Rainbow Springs Boat Tour Chant*; Cousin Thelma Boltin: *The Bell Witch*; Frog Smith: *Bone Mizell*; Amigo Male Singers: *Climbing Up the Mountain Children*; Josie Billie: *Seminole Song*; Cush Holston: *Old Coon Dog*; Carver School (Children): *Zoodio*; Bob Pavitt: *Hurricane Donna*; Will McLean: *Tate's Hell*; Gamble Rogers: *Masterbuilders*; American Czech Tourist Society Chorus: *U Nasich Kasaren (At Our Army Barracks)*; Skip Johns & the Travelers: *Orange Blossom Special*; Tom and Michael Moore: *Old Number Nine*; Frank Mitchell and George Heaps-Nelson: *Shoeshine Rag*. Single LP in double sleeve, with jacket liner notes on inside and outside back cover by Ormond H. Loomis and Doris J. Dyen.

This album, edited by Doris J. Dyen, samples the annual on-going folk festival of Florida, an event which features a remarkably wide variety of oral entertainment, judging by this album. Side I (the first 5 items listed above) includes (in order) a folktale; a tall tale; a boat skipper's touring chant; a widely-known ghost story originating in Tennessee (though collected, by the performer, in Florida); and a local tall tale. The second side consists of a black gospel quartet song; a native American ceremonial chant; a fiddle tune (with strawbeating); a schoolchildren's singing game; 1960 Florida disaster ballad; a spoken ballad poem; a humorous folksong about the role of the animals in building Noah's ark--sung, in talking blues fashion, to fine Travis-style guitar-picking; a Czech song of military life, sung by chorus with piano accompaniment; a bluegrass instrumental; a railroad wreck ballad; and a harmonica instrumental accompanied by shoeshine cloth slapping. Although documentation is sparse, the uniqueness of many of the items presented makes this a useful collection for demonstration purposes.

--Norm Cohen

#### RECORDS BRIEFLY NOTED

THE LOUISIANA FOLKLIFE CENTER's first three records, issued in 1980-82, have not been noted in JEMFQ. *Cornbread for Your Husband and Biscuits for Your Man: Mr. Clifford Blake, Sr., Calls the Cotton Press* (LFRS LP-001), is the most unusual of the three, featuring songs, tales, and oral narrative by a long-time resident of Natchitoches, La. Blake has worked for some five decades at cotton compresses, and three tracks deal with this occupation; noteworthy is a rarely (if ever) recorded cotton press call, which Blake avers helps "you press fifty bales more an hour." Among the tales are one "John" tale, one a Br'er Rabbit tale, and some animal tales. The record is accompanied by an issue of Louisiana Folklife that includes three articles about Blake, effectively serving as a record brochure. These articles deal with black speech as exemplified by Blake (written by J.L. Dillard); calling the cotton press (Donald W. Hatley); and Blake as a bearer of Afro-American folk narrative tradition (James W. Byrd). *The North Louisiana String Band* (LFRS LP-002) features an old-time string band recorded at the 1980 Natchitoches Folk Festival, shortly before the untimely death of its fiddler, Ray Beebe. The second side features various North Louisiana musicians playing with the band in a makeshift studio in the same year. Accompanying the record is the March 1981 issue of Louisiana Folklife, consisting of history of the band, details about the circumstances of the recordings, and notes to the songs, all by Susan Roach-Lankford. *Since Ol' Gabriel's Time: Hezekiah and the Houserockers* (LFRS LP-003) features an unusual blues band from Ferriday, La., recorded in part there (in 1981) and in part at the Natchitoches Folk Festival of 1981. The band consists of Hezekiah Early, drums, harmonica and vocals; Peewee Whittington/Whittaker (the LP jacket gives one surname, the booklet, another), trombone and vocals; and James Baker, electric guitar. Like the above mentioned albums, this one also comes with an issue of Louisiana Folklife that constitutes the brochure notes, written by David Evans and including extensive biographical information and brief notes on the selections. These include several original compositions, covers of familiar blues and r&b titles by such artists as B.B. King and T. Bone Walker; traditional blues; a revised version of "St. Louis Blues;" and a Delmore Brothers hillbilly blues tune.

FOLKWAYS RECORDS continues with its rambling series of reissues of ragtime/blues/novelty piano music compiled by David A. Jasen. *Ragtime Piano Novelties of the '20s* (Folkways RBF 42) includes 13 selections by American and English pianists recorded between 1922 and 1933. A few of the titles once enjoyed great popularity: "Pianoflage," "Nola," "Doll Dance," and "Rag Doll," in particular. Zez Confrey, one of the prime creators of the novelty piano rag, was also the arranger/performer of many piano roll renditions of contemporary favorites, a role that is explored on *The Piano Roll Artistry of Zez Confrey* (Folkways RBF 45). This disc includes 18 of his 174 piano rolls, cut between 1919 and 1925. Confrey's penchant for putting three or four notes where pianists of lesser mettle (or more restraint) would put only one, is illustrated amply on these popular songs and tune of the day. *Swingin' Piano--1920-46* (Folkways RBF 46) is a more diverse collection of 16 piano recordings originally made over a spread of years that saw many changes in America's popular music tastes. Jazz and pop hits are played in a variety of styles--blues, ragtime, novelty rag, stride--by Eubie Blake ("Ma"), Albert Ammons ("St. Louis Blues"), Fats Waller ("Sweet Savannah Sue"), Frank Banta ("I Wonder Where My Baby Is Tonight"), Pete Wendling ("Usen't You Use To Be My Sweetie") and lesser knowns. Two highlights on the album are Garland Wilson's recording of his own composition, "Shim Sham Drag," and Pauline Albert's unusual interpretation of "Sweet Sue," made in 1946. *Jelly Roll Morton Piano Classics: 1923-24* (Folkways RBF 47) includes 19 recordings made by Morton in one two-year period in chronological order, mostly for the Gennett Company. All but three are his own compositions. For each of these albums, Jasen provides brief notations on the songs, composers, and/or performers, and points out musical highlights in 3- or 4-page brochure inserts.

ETHNIC MUSICAL TRADITIONS continue to attract interest in this country; four reissue albums produced in 1983 are at hand. *Texas Czech-Bohemian Bands: Early Recordings--1928-1953* (Folklyric 9031) examines a musical tradition that interacted strongly with western swing and country music earlier in this century. (One popular band--Adolph Hofner & his Texans, represented here by one cut--was fluent in both the Czech and western swing idioms.) Side A covers the 1928-38 period and features the Baca Orchestra, Adolph Pavlas, and Hofner. Side B, devoted to 1948-58, presents orchestras of Joe Patek, Benny Brosh, John R. Baca, and Ray Krenek, and Louis & his Old Time Band. Editor Chris Strachwitz provides background information on the Czechs in Texas and their music in the back liner notes. *Los Hermanos Chavarria* (Folklyric 9037) is Vol. 19 in a continuing series of Texas-Mexican Border Music on Arhoolie Records' subsidiary Folklyric label. The 15 selections by San Antonio artists Alfonso and Martin Echavarria were recorded in 1930-32 for Columbia and 1936-37 for Decca. The popular duo recorded over 100 selections altogether in the 1930s, and then again after the War. A biographical sketch of the artists on the back jacket liner by Will Spires is supplemented by a 7-page brochure insert, which contains notes on the songs, text transcriptions and translations, and a bibliography. The selections consist of vocal duets with one or two guitars or guitar/violin accompaniment. *Las Hermanas Mendoza* (Arhoolie 2017) reissues 15 selections originally recorded in Los Angeles in 1946-52 for the Azteca label by Juanita and Maria Mendoza, younger sisters of the near-legendary Mexican-American artist, Lydia Mendoza. On these recordings, selected from the hundreds that the sisters made in the six-year period before their career was abruptly ended by their mother's death, Lydia accompanies her sisters' singing (and Maria's guitar) with her own lead guitar. *From the Tatra Mountains* (Morning Star 45007) reissues 14 Polish-American selections, mostly by bands from the Chicago area made in the late 1920s for Victor and Columbia. Norm Cohen had the audacity to write the backjacket liner notes for this album, produced by Richard Nevins.

--Norm Cohen

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# BOOK REVIEWS

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**EVERYBODY'S GRANDPA: Fifty Years Behind the Mike**, by Louis M. "Grandpa" Jones with Charles K. Wolfe (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984). xi + 288 pp., 8" x 8½", hardcover, photos, index, discography, biographical notes.

The book opens with Louis Marshall, "Grandpa" Jones, perhaps the best-known living Kentuckian, in tuxedo, getting ready for the 1978 Country Music Awards, thinking back over his career, especially to that night in March 1929 when he first played to an audience in an amateur contest, with a twelve-dollar guitar, to win the first prize of \$50 in ten-dollar gold pieces. The chapter ends with Grandpa winning the big one -- membership in the Country Music Hall of Fame. He was 65 years old and had been in the music business a few months shy of 50 years.

Good beginning. The book quickly backtracks to pick up the threads of Grandpa's childhood in Henderson County, Kentucky, evoking hard times on numerous tenant farms and family flights to jobs in Indiana and Ohio. When the family migrated, they took rural Kentucky culture with them, as insulation against the coldness of the North and, for Marshall, as a saleable resource. In Toledo, young Jones sang for high school programs, played for dances and, after the talent contest, was invited to sing on the radio. The rest of the story unwinds in an entertaining fashion, as Jones links up with "Harmonica Joe" Troyan and Bradley Kincaid (who first called him Grandpa), and plays in New England, later in West Virginia and Germany (as a U.S. soldier), on the "Grand Ole Opry," and on "Hee Haw." Along the way he marries fiddler Ramona Riggins and they raise a musical family.

The story is an interesting one and well-told. Usually the words "with" or "as told to," introducing the second of co-authors, signal to the reader that the book has been written by a professional writer with a minimum of effort on the part of the first-listed author. This is not the case with Everybody's Grandpa. After entering the Hall of Fame, Grandpa set to work to tell his story. He wrote seventy-five or so pages. When Charles K. Wolfe, a prolific writer and producer of records and other materials, joined the project, he thoroughly interviewed Grandpa, Ramona and others who could contribute information, and he encouraged Grandpa to interview people such as Bradley Kincaid. Wolfe has a great ear and eye for story-telling. He has mastered Grandpa's writing and speaking style, and thus the book flows in first person as Grandpa's story, even in much of the background material which is surely from Wolfe's commodious memory and scholarly files. The collaboration is an enviable achievement, and I say this as one who has struggled to write about musicians who were far more appealing in person than they were on the pages that I wrote. Grandpa was not one to turn his typed pages and collected photographs over to a ghost writer and trust his judgment about how they should be used and what should be added to them. He read copy, fussed over details and nuances that didn't quite fit with his remembrance and sent his co-author back to the typewriter.

Grandpa Jones is an important person in traditional and country music. Few musicians who were performing professionally on radio stations in the late 1920s are still performing. Grandpa, on the other hand, is perhaps more popular now than he ever was. He came to show business mainly with a traditional repertory, plus songs made popular by contemporaries who preceded him on the air or onto recordings. He responded quickly to the demands of a daily show and personal appearances, by learning new songs and by writing his own



(Examples: "The Tragic Romance," "Eight More Miles to Louisville," "I'll be Around if You Need Me," "It's Raining Here this Morning," "Old Rattler," "East Bound Freight Train," "On That Great Judgment Morning" and "Send Me Your Address from Heaven"). He became a good musician, and he had a beautiful tenor voice. Although he was skittish of audiences at first, he had appeal, and he mastered the tricks of the trade. At first, he saw himself as a serious musician, but he knew that people love a laugh, and so he became "Grandpa," a jokester who said and did funny things, sang humorous songs and clowned around. Underneath, though, he is still the serious musician who loves the ballads he learned from family or Bradley Kincaid, who loves to sing harmony on hymns or join Ramona and Alisa on a tender folk song. He also writes poetry. He has now been in the business 56 years, surmounting bouts with illness and major surgery. He and Ramona have established a country music dinner theater in Mountain View, Arkansas. He looks ahead.

Wolfe's imagination and scholarly enterprise are evident in the organization and detail of the book, in the biographical notes, the discography and the index. The biographical notes contain only information about the older, perhaps lesser-known persons, who were associated with Grandpa, not of "Grand Ole Opry" stars, even those of the vintage of Uncle Dave Macon. Notes on some of the others mentioned more than once in the book might well have been included -- persons such as the Willis Brothers, Connie B. Gay and Jethro Burns.

The photographs are wonderful. Included are shots of Grandpa's mother plucking a duck; Louis Marshall Jones as a small boy in sailor suit or overalls, looking out at the world through those intelligent, pale-blue slanted Jones eyes; as a young entertainer, besuited and bow-tied; as twenty-some-year-old "Grandpa;" as a soldier; as a "Grand Ole Opry" and "Hee Haw" star; and with Ramona and the children. They reflect a family who cares about its past and wishes to preserve records of events that are important to them.

It is difficult to get an element of objective criticism into a "first person" book of this sort. The nearest thing to it in Everybody's Grandpa is a chapter of fan letters which show that Grandpa is appreciated. Yet, since it is from a university press and co-written by an able scholar, one might wish to have some comment on Grandpa's work and its effect on fellow musicians and on fans. This might have been accomplished by Wolfe in an introduction to the book or in an afterword. Nitpicking aside, this reviewer found this to be a well-written book with a wealth of detail not only about Grandpa but about his times, associates and the music business as he knew it. The discography, the listing of the songs in Grandpa's songbooks and albums and the biographical notes are well-done and useful. The appearance -- the layout, type and photos -- is first-rate. It is a book folk and country fans and libraries should have.

--Loyal Jones  
Berea College  
Berea, Kentucky

**COUNTRY MUSIC RECORDED PRIOR TO 1943: A Discography of LP Reissues**, by Willie Smyth (Los Angeles: the John Edwards Memorial Forum, 1984), 8½" x 11", i + 83 pp., papercovers, \$7.50

The Old Time Reissue Express first pulled out of its shed more than 30 years ago, but after a few trial runs and one long scenic journey (Harry Smith's Folkways Anthology) it went out of commission for another decade. With the establishment in the early '60s of the Old Timey and County labels, however, something like a reissue schedule came into being -- and now, 20-odd years on, we can confidently expect new arrivals, from one direction or another, every few weeks.

This booklet is in effect a survey of those years, in the form of a catalogue, arranged alphabetically by label, of 10" and 12" LPs containing country music recorded before 1943 -- this description embracing issued 78s, material recorded to be so issued but rejected at the time, and electrical transcriptions. This catalogue is followed by a partly analytical index of song and tune titles and an artist index. In short, the booklet answers most of the kinds of questions that collectors of reissue LPs might ordinarily ask, questions like: "Where can I find 'Corn Dodger Special No. 1'?" or "What albums contain everything available by the Blue

Ridge Mountain Singers?"; or "Is that Carter Family LP from Japan really the same as the U.S. one with the same title?"

Putting these sections of the booklet randomly through their paces I found a high score of comprehensiveness and accuracy. If I now seem to spend a lot of time listing errors and oversights, it is to help the booklet's users rather than to reprove its compiler.

To soothe bruised Limey pride and have done with it: Camden CAL797 by the Blue Sky Boys was also issued in Britain on CDN5116; Columbia KG32416, the Bob Wills Anthology, was compressed into a 16-track single LP of the same name on CBS Embassy 31611; and the British office of RCA not only issued numerous items from the U.S. LPM and LPV series, including all the Jimmie Rodgers sets and some of the Vintage Series country items, but also initiated three double albums in the local DPS/DPM series, two by Rodgers and one by the Carter Family.

While on RCA material, I should commend Smyth for tracking down several obscure RCA and Camden anthologies that might easily have been forgotten, and for knowing about the curious 4-LP boxed set Nieman Marcus First Edition. The documentation of Japanese RCA reissues looks well done too, but be warned that the Carter Family set titled 'Mid the Green Fields of Virginia (RA-5321) is not a replica of the familiar LPM-2772, but a quite different selection.

The booklet's oversights are by and large of two kinds. Some LPs are duly listed, but with one or more of their relevant tracks omitted. This seems to happen most often with LPs whose contents are only part-relevant, such as those also containing black material, or country items recorded after 1943, and I should guess that Smyth simply failed to recognize some obscure artist-credits as relevant to his research. For instance, the selected listing from Yazoo 1045 String Ragtime should also include Walker's Corbin Ramblers' "E Rag" and Herald Goodman's "Banjo Rag"; Rounder 1012 Hula Blues also has Patt Patterson's Champion Rep Riders' "The Cat's Whiskers"; Folkways RBF19 Country Gospel Song is short five tracks of relevant white material; and I could hardly fail to notice that CBS (Britain) 52796 Blacks Whites and Blues is listed without Ramblin' Red Lowery's "Ramblin' Red's Memphis Yodel No. 1".

In a slightly different category are LPs that similarly contain only a few relevant items but escaped the compiler's notice completely -- perhaps because they were explicitly designed for a different faction than country collections. Yazoo 1046 The Voice of the Blues: Bottleneck Guitar Masterpieces includes Jimmie Davis's "She's A Hum Dum Dinger from Dingersville" (also "Corrine Corrina Blues" by the Too Bad Boys, whom I suspect of being a masked John Westbrook group -- my reasons are summarized in a note in the latest edition of Blues & Gospel Records, p. 758); Yazoo 1053 Harmonica Blues has cuts by the Carver Boys, Ashley & Foster and Chuck Darling; Stash ST-119 Reefer Madness includes a piece each by Dick Justice and Ernest Rogers; and Roots (Austria) RL-321 The Great Harmonica Players Volume 2 has "Mountain Blues" by Jimmy Smith (admittedly a fringe performer).

In some cases there may have been genuine doubt about the performer's colour. We know now that Bert Bilbro was white, so the booklet should add Magnolia (Sweden) 502 Rough Alley Blues: Blues from Georgia 1924-1931 for its two Bilbro items, but the file is perhaps still open on harmonica-player Palmer McAbee, who is listed for his contribution to RCA LPV-532 The Railroad in Folksong but not for his later appearances on Roots and Matchbox. The compiler's policy was in fact to include black recordings "marketed as hillbilly records because of their musical style", and he duly puts in Nap Hayes & Matthew Prater's OKeh hillbilly releases as reissued on Historical BC-2433-2 -- only to overlook them on Piedmont PLP13158 and Yazoo 1045. Conversely, "Violin Blues" by the Johnson Boys (essentially the same group) is included in the track-listing for New World NW290 Let's Get Loose, though originally issued in a race series (OK 8708). Speaking of New World, a set in that series has been entirely omitted, NW235 Maple Leaf Rag: Ragtime in Rural America (Notes: Lawrence Cohn), which contains pieces by Jimmie Tarlton, Gid Tanner & the Skillet-Lickers, (Roy) Harvey & (Jess) Johns(t)on, the Spooney Five and Bill Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers.

Other records that make no showing, but ought to, include Columbia Special Products P4-15542 Legendary Songs of the Old West, a 4-LP boxed set, issued in 1981, that included

many items never issued on 78; 51 West Q16107 The Original Humbard Family, containing their entire 1940 Dallas session; the three Wilf Carter (Montana Slim) reissues from Bluebird that appeared fleetingly in the '70s as Wilf Carter Edition WCE1, 2 and 3, ostensibly from Canada but more probably, in my view, from West Germany; and, perhaps a slightly more careless omission, the handful of hillbilly items reissued amidst Australian country recordings on Larrikin and Selection.

You would hardly expect to find a record in that should be out, but I'm sure that Decca DL4785 by Asher Sizemore & Little Jimmie is post-1943, though it is true that the sleeve notes would have you infer otherwise.

So far I have assumed that readers are prepared to accept terms like "country music" and "hillbilly" without cavil, but something should be said about the booklet's principles of selection, partly because Norm Cohen deals with them carefully, if briefly, in his preface and partly because I have given some thought to them myself while working, under the aegis of the Country Music Foundation, on the full-scale country discography. Cohen's working definition -- if I may so describe it without implying that it is his last or most considered word on the matter -- is: "music recorded commercially by southern white artists and intended for sale primarily to consumers of the same cultural/geographic segment of the population." (For the purposes of the booklet cajun recordings were theoretically omitted, though in fact a few show up.)

Not a bad description, but not free from awkward problems. Mellie Dunham was not southern, but arguably his records were marketed as if he was. The Henry Ford bands were neither southern nor marketed as such, but many regard them as having a good stylistic claim to be included in a country discography. Some gospel quartets were undoubtedly southern, but nothing in their style would reveal it. Some artists were not only not southern but not even U.S.-born at all, like Hank Snow and Wilf Carter, but they seem to have an unassailable stylistic case (and both are included in the booklet). (Perhaps it was with them in mind that one correspondent has urged me, quite seriously, to include all Australian country recordings of the period.)

More damaging to the working definition, a number of recording acts fit it precisely but are nonetheless not, by any reasonable criterion, country music practitioners. Victor's hillbilly "special list", the V-40000 series, included at least ten southern-based dancebands; Blue Steele's Orchestra, from Memphis, had four couplings in the series, and Billy Hays' Orchestra five. Clearly no country music discography needs to include such material, though I believe it ought to allude to it.

Another set of problems is posed by groups that inhabit the borderlands between recognizable country music and novelty music: the Hoosier Hotshots, Bob Skyles' Skyrockets, Frank Novak's Rootin' Tootin' Boys, the Dixie Demons, Cody Fox's Yellow Jackets; or that other fringe region, between country music and jazz, like Whitey McPherson's Rhythm Wreckers (part-listed, indeed, in Rust's Jazz Records) or the Swift Jewel Cowboys. But all this, absorbing as it is to the fraternity, does not much affect one's dealings with Willie Smyth's booklet, since, the Hoosier Hotshots aside, most of the "problem figures" are too unfashionable to have made it on to LP yet. For most enthusiasts, collectors and whatever other users there may be, the Cohen formulation and the method that it underpins have between them produced an invaluable handbook. Pleasant extra touches are lists of recommended LPs and a short history of the country reissue album. It has been well proof-read and neatly assembled, too. I recommend it to all album-gatherers, and I hope the JEMF are inspired by a warm response to consider the prospect of updating it in a few years' time. The LPs keep on coming, they've lately been joined by cassettes and -- who knows? -- the late '80s may even bring us old time music on compact discs.

--Tony Russell  
Old Time Music, London



**THE AMERICAN 45 AND 78 RPM RECORD DATING GUIDE, 1940-1959**, Compiled by William R. Daniels (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985). No. 16 in their series of Discographies. xii + 157 pp; \$37.50, clothcovers.

Dating a record has long been a matter of some concern not only to fans and collectors, but also to musicologists, historians, occasionally lawyers, and other "serious" users of sound recordings for documentary purposes. Unfortunately, "dating" a record is a term of some imprecision. At very least there are two important dates involved: the recording date and the release date. During the 78 rpm era, the recording date was well defined, since any given recording was made at a given time and place and rarely tampered with subsequently. (There were only occasional instances of overdubbing or other technical manipulation.) Since the advent of the use of magnetic recording tape for the initial recordings, it has been possible and common to remix different instrumental or vocal tracks; to snip out segments, and to splice in corrected portions from alternate takes long after the artists have left the recording studios. Under such a mode of operation, the "date of recording" becomes a fuzzy ideal concept which may or may not have a close approximation in actual practice.

There are problems of a different sort in defining the release date of a record. Is it the date the record is available in the stores? (In all the stores?) Is it the date it is advertised in trade publications? Is it the date of first airing on some radio station? As is true of the recording date, the release date is subject to greater uncertainty in the post-78 rpm era; in this case because of the involvement of more media, although the problems are generally less complex.

Often, one may have a good basis for knowing either the recording or the release date. What can he then surmise about the other? The only incontrovertible conclusion that one can draw is that the former preceded the latter. The length of the interval between recording and release has varied considerably at different eras and under different corporate practices. When a recording was made in response to a specific historic event, lag times as short as a week or two have been known. At the other extreme, a recording could have been rejected as unsuitable at the time of recording and buried in company vaults for years until some change of circumstances (such as the death of the artist) prompted a fresh decision to release what had been rejected. Apart from such extremes, one assumes that an interval of a few weeks or at most months separated a recording date from a release date; most chroniclers have operated under that assumption.

There have been many attempts to offer the interested public charts and tables of recording and/or release dates. The earliest I am aware of (were there others still earlier?) was Arnold B. Stilwell's Record Dating Chart, Pt. 1, published by the long-defunct magazine, The Record Changer, and copyrighted in 1948. This 17 x 22 inch chart listed time-lines for record labels of the 1920s (part 2, covering the 1930s, was never, to my knowledge, issued), with sample master and release numbers posted at appropriate positions to indicate both the year of recording and release.

Other compilations, in various formats, followed, generally focusing on some particular musical genre. In the early 1960s, Bob Healy published a six-page chart, "Your Quick Check Chart of Recording Dates" (Disc Collector #19) especially for the hillbilly record collector. In 1973, Charlie the Collector issued his 18-page pamphlet, When Was That Old Record Made?, giving release dates for popular 10-inch 78s from 1908 to 1958. In 1979, Steven C. Barr issued The (almost) Complete 78 rpm Record Dating Guide, a 50-page mimeographed booklet with separate sections devoted to recording dates and to release dates. In 1981, Bill Daniels issued his Disc Dating Guide, 1940-1949, a 36-page pamphlet with 21 pages devoted to listings of record release numbers and release dates. The volume under review is an expanded version of this latter compilation.

Unlike most earlier compilations, which were aimed at a jazz (or hillbilly/blues) audience, Daniels' primary interest is in pop, rock, and r&b, and he takes up the chronology where most other compilers leave off. He notes in his preface that this guide "...enables the reader to date the specific month of record release for single issues of almost 2,500 record companies, a total of 93,000 individual discs." Since the quantity of releases actually listed is closer to 20- or 25,000 items, I take it that Daniels arrived at the larger total by allowing for interpolation between release numbers separated by one or a few months.

Daniels' sources are primarily trade publications; he has operated under the assumption "that record companies were faithful and prompt in sending out copies of their releases to magazines for listing, advertising, and review." (By this statement, Daniels implies that he has a separate notion of "release date" apart from notice in publications--a rather abstract concept that may be difficult to put to practical use.)

Consistent with his major interests (and perhaps inevitable, considering his sources), Daniels does not include many of the numerous small labels of the period that were aimed at particular ethnic communities; but these pose completely different problems of cataloguing, and Daniels is not to be faulted for their omission.

There are a few problems with the format. It would have been helpful to provide some distinguishing information for multiple labels with the same name--such as Sun of New York as distinct from Sun of Nashville. Or for the two Kangeroo labels (but really were they both misspelled?). Joe Davis' Gennett label is listed with the instruction, "see Beacon." However, for some reason it is not listed under Beacon. The forerunner of the Folkways label is listed, but it is misspelt "Ash." (Other misspellings and typographical errors elsewhere in the book, all of which is photoreproduced from a typed original, suggest that more care could have been taken in the editorial process.)

All in all, Daniels has done a great deal of painstaking library research that will serve well anyone for whom the date of a record is ever a matter of concern. The special problems, the anomalies, and the other irregularities can be and will have to be--treated on a case-by-case basis as the interest or need arises.

Greenwood Press, the publishers, deserve continued encouragement from the small community of users for their continuing series of publications of bibliographies and discographies that will have very narrow market appeal. Nevertheless, I am forced to wonder whether even such a low sales potential as--say--500 should necessitate a sale price of almost 25 cents per page. Is there not another way to support the dissemination of reference works such as this so that individuals as well as institutions can afford to purchase them?

--Norm Cohen

**THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF DISCOGRAPHY OF VICTOR RECORDINGS: Pre-Matrix Series. The Consolidated Talking Machine Company, Eldridge R. Johnson, and The Victor Talking Machine Company, 12 January 1900 to 23 April 1903; with a special appendix, *The Victor Talking Machine Company*, by B.L. Aldridge. Compiled by Ted Fagan and William R. Moran (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983). lxix + 393 pp., photos; \$49.95, clothcovers.**

Brian Rust's The Victor Master Book, Vol. 2, published in 1969, was a welcome reference for pop, jazz, blues, and hillbilly music aficionados because it listed all recordings made between 1925 and 1936 in order of master number in those categories. Those interested in foreign language or classical or educational recordings were not only slighted, but left with the worry that, these key areas having now been catalogued, who would ever bother with the rest? The answer to their silent prayers--forgive the bit of melodrama--was Ted Fagan, an Associate to Stanford University's Archive of Recorded Sound and Adjunct Professor of Interpretation at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Twenty years ago Fagan approached RCA Victor for access to their files to begin a comprehensive discographic compilation of all of the company's recorded material. Permission was granted and work began at once. This volume is the first of what--if ever completed--will necessarily run into more than a dozen comparable volumes.

The 69 pages of front matter include a brief preface by Fagan and a lengthier introduction by Bill Moran, well-known among record collectors and collecting organizations for his discographic articles and books on classical recordings. This introduction discusses the early history of the Victor company and its predecessors with attention to technical matters that relate to the use and nature of "masters" and "master Number," and release numbers. Sixteen photographs illustrate early Victor and predecessor labels. An appendix to the

introduction is a facsimile photoreproduction of an extremely rare publication, "The Victor Talking Machine Company," a history of the company written by B.L. Aldridge and published in 1964.

Pages 1 through 210, the bulk of the volume, consist of a sequential listing of "pre-matrix" numbers--recordings made by the earlier Berliner etching technique, before the introduction of Eldridge R. Johnson's own invention of the master recording technique. (This entailed making an original wax master by the usual acoustical technique, then a negative metal master from the wax master, then a positive "mother" from the metal master, then a negative "stamper," from which the actual records were pressed. Berliner's technique had involved recording on a wax-coated metal master; the recording process resulted in removal of wax coatings from the metal, which was then acid-etched.) A typical entry includes serial/catalog number, artist and title, recording dates for each of the "take" numbers, release numbers(s), number of copies pressed, and date when the metal stamper was found defective and returned to the factory for cleaning, repair, or destruction.

Pages 221-337 give a chronological list of all recording sessions in the time period under discussion (some sessions are from later in 1903). This is followed by several pages of notes about various artists and recordings culled from early Victor catalogs and other contemporaneous sources. There then follow alphabetical artist and title indexes. The former gives, where known, birth and death dates.

There is no need to spare superlatives in recommending this book. Quite simply, it is the first volume of what will be the most important discographic reference series in print. Eventually (when? by whom?) the same should be done for every label--rather than attack the problem of discography in the fragmentary manner which has been the rule until now: focusing on individual artists, genres, compositions, or styles. From this volume and its successors, with its indexes, all the rest can be done. One only hopes the authors have availed themselves of the modern word processing and computer tools available to streamline the work and minimize errors and inconsistencies. Whether this book is a labor of love or of compulsion I cannot say; I can say that whichever, we will all enjoy its fruits.

--Norm Cohen

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

**THE OFFICIAL 1984 PRICE GUIDE TO RECORDS** Thomas E. Hudgeons III, editor, 5th edition (Orlando: House of Collectibles, Inc., 1984). 554 pp., photos; 5½ x 8"; papercovers, \$9.95. This price guide, one of many now on the market, lists prices for some 31,000 45s, eps, and lps by over 1100 artists from the fields of rock, country, pop, r&b, and jazz--though mostly rock and r&b. The arrangement is alphabetical by artist, then by labels for each artist, in approximately chronological order; and numerically in each label listing. 45s, eps, and lps are listed separately. Three prices are given for each listing: current values for very good and mint discs; and last year's mint prices. A notice in the front of the book states that prices "are compiled through a computerized process which relies on a nation-wide sampling of information obtained from noteworthy collectibles experts, auction houses, and specialized dealers." Other front matter is subdivided into: market review; nostalgia and collecting; collecting independent labels; "in memory,"; birth and growth of rock; country rock; beginning a collection; glossary; buying rock records; record shows and conventions; memorabilia; all about investing; cleaning and storage; how to sell your records; will current records become valuable?; recommended reading; and how to use this book. Comparison with L.R. Docks' 1915-1963 American Premium Record Guide (1980) shows that in many cases similar price ranges are given for the same disc; nevertheless there are often startling discrepancies.



**POPULAR MUSIC: AN ANNOTATED GUIDE TO RECORDINGS**, By Dean Tudor (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unltd., 1984). xxii + 647 pp., hardbound, \$65.00 (in U.S.; \$78.00 elsewhere). This useful volume is an updated and combined edition of four previous guides published in 1979: Jazz, Black Music, Grass Roots Music, and Contemporary Popular Music. Intended as a buying guide for libraries as well as individuals, this guide includes general descriptions of each of the kinds of musics included, summarizing musical roots and historical developments, as well as drawing attention to key figures. Each album has typically a 100-200 word description, giving background on the performer(s), noting important songs, or pointing out other significant aspects of the album. The compression of those four works into a single volume was not accomplished without some deletions. For example, the 260 pages of listings of the Grass Roots Music volume is here reduced to 185 pages. About 30% of this reduction was accomplished by more text per page; thus there is about 10% less text. The number of albums reviewed has decreased only slightly: 851 in the earlier volume as compared to 833 in the corresponding sections of the book currently under review. A number of albums, many now out-of-print, have been deleted and replaced with more recent--and generally better selections. Unquestionably, any other editor would have a different set of selections, but nevertheless there is little that is worth a serious complaint. One can, though, wonder about the organization. For example, one subdivision of "Folk Music" is Old Time Music, which in turn is divided into Anthologies, Minstrels, String Bands, and Duos/Groups. Each of the last three categories is further divided into Innovators and Performers. Why are Uncle Dave Macon and Blind Alfred Reed innovators, while Dock Boggs and Kelly Harrell are performers? Why are the New Lost City Ramblers listed under both String Bands--Innovators, and String Bands--Performers? Why are the Monroe Brothers in Duos--Innovators, while the Allen Brothers are in Duos--Performers? There are other apparent anomalies elsewhere. Hedy West is listed under American Folk Tradition, but Doc Watson is under American Folk Revival. Fortunately, such decisions will not handicap the user already familiar with the artists because there is a complete artist index. Regrettably, the very useful label index of the earlier volumes has been excised from this edition. Although the price may seem exorbitant, it is considerably less than the four 1979 volumes together would cost--if one could still find them.

**TEXAS RHYTHM--TEXAS RHYME: A Pictorial History of Texas Music**, by Larry Willoughby (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1984), xii + 144 pp.; 222 photos, index, bibliographic essay; 8½ x 11", clothcovers, \$16.95. When the author moved to Austin in the early 1970s, he found himself in a hotbed of intercultural musical creativity. His subsequent efforts to learn about the origins and development of Texas music led to the present volume. In successive chapters he treats the 19th century tradition--including native American, Afro-American, Anglo-American and Euro-American backgrounds; early country music--including discussions of Eck Robertson, Vernon Dalhart, Floyd Tillman, Ernest Tubb, and Woody Guthrie; the singing cowboys--including Carl T. Sprague, Jules V. Allen, Gene Autry, and Tex Ritter; country blues--Blind Lemon Jefferson, Huddie Ledbetter, Victoria Spivey, Lightnin' Hopkins, Mance Lipscomb, and others; western swing--Bob Wills, Milton Brown, Alvin Crow; jazz and the big bands--discussing Don Albert, Jack Teagarden, Teddy Wilson, Ornette Coleman, and others; rhythm & blues--with T-Bone Walker, Esther Phillips, Barbara Lynn, Albert Collins, Delbert McClinton, and Stevie Ray Vaughn; rock & roll--especially Buddy Holly, Roy Orbison, Mike Nesmith, Janis Joplin, J.D. Souther, and Steve Miller; modern country--including Willie Nelson, George Jones, Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings, John Denver, Flaco Jimenez, Freddy Fender, and Johnny Rodriguez; and finally the Austin music scene in the 1970s and '80s.

**FOLKSONG & MUSIC HALL**, by Edward Lee (London, Boston, Melbourne, and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982). x + 148 pp.; photos, glossary of musical terms, index; 6 x 9", clothcovers, \$12.95. This is one of a series of eight volumes on various aspects of music--jazz and blues, reggae, rock, soul, etc. This book is designed for classroom use--probably at the secondary school level in the United States. The scope of the survey is best indicated by the chapter titles and subtitles: (1) Folk Music: the music of the countryside; (2) Looking Forward: folk music in the United States; (3) Times of Change: music in the towns before 1800; (4) Music and the Middle Classes; (5) Religious Music: a music for all classes; (6) Music and the Working Classes; and (7) Dancing. Notwithstanding his pedagogical tenor the author is remarkably successful at highlighting the sociological aspects of music: the role of the musicians and their impact on society, attitudes towards the musicians and their music; and the sociology of classical, as distinct from folk and popular music. The focus of the book is music of the British Isles, though there is much that would interest American school children as well.

**MUSIC MAKING IN AMERICA**, by Dick Weissman (New York: Ungar, 1982). viii + 147 pp., photos, index, recommended reading list, 5½ x 8½", clothcovers, \$12.95. Drawing on his 16 years' experience in the music business--as studio musician, solo artist, teacher, composer, and author--Weissman offers some interesting thoughts on such questions as how to teach and interest youngsters in music and what the career is like for the 98% of musicians who do not constitute the successful elite. Of particular interest is his autobiographical chapter, "Confessions of an Unrepentant Banjo Player," which has much anecdotal material about the folk revival and the emergence of folk-rock music. The book's one weakness is the lack of cohesiveness among the various chapters. "The Life and Music of the American Cowboy" is only peripherally related to the other chapters, though it is not without intrinsic merits. One chapter, "Opening Acts: The Infantry of Rock and Roll," written by Artie Traum, is informative but a bit awkwardly placed. Weissman's chapter, "Muzak and the Listener" offers some provocative insights into ghetto blasters (I've also heard them described as "third-world communicators"), walkman radios, and the different ways in which music intrudes into our private and not-so-private lives.

**THE CASHBOX COUNTRY SINGLES CHARTS, 1958-82**. Compiled by George Albert and Frank Hoffmann (Metuchen, N.J. and London: Scarecrow Press, 1984). x + 596 pp., clothcovers, \$37.50. This book follows the same format as the volume released last year, The Cash Box Singles Charts, 1950-1981, noted in JEMFQ #71, p. 203. Its principal contents are an alphabetical artist index listing all song titles that appeared in Cash Box's country singles charts from inception through 1982. Song titles are listed in order of date of first appearance. For each song is given the chart position for each week that the song remained on the charts. Also given for each song are the record label and release number. This listing is followed by an alphabetical song title index that gives for each song the recording artist's name under which more data can be found. Appendices include: a chronological listing of No. 1 records; records with the longest runs on the charts; artists with the greatest number of No. 1 hits; artists with the most weeks at No. 1; and records with most weeks at No. 1. A brief introduction by Hoffmann comments on the methodology and the differences between the country and the pop charts, which cautions against indiscriminate comparisons between country and pop charts; or even between country charts of different chronological periods.

**NOT FADE AWAY: A Comparison of Jazz Age with Rock Era Pop Song Composers**, By Walter Rimler (Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1984). xvii + 221 pp., \$14.95 (to individuals; \$17.95 to institutions) clothcovers. The writers receiving primary attention in this study are: George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Harold Arlen, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, Bob Dylan, Carole King, Holland-Dozier-Holland, and Paul Simon.

**THE COLLECTOR'S GUIDE TO THE AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATRE**, by David Hummel. (Metuchen, N.J. and London: Scarecrow Press, 1984). Vol. I: The Shows (xlv + 662 pp.); Vol. II: Index (231 pp.). \$89.50, clothcovers, 8½ x 11". The main portion of Vol. I is an alphabetical title listing of all theater musicals presented on stage in the United States. Show title is followed by names of composer, lyricist, author of the book (or, in case of a revue, of the sketches), opening date, theater, and city, number of performances of the original run, and revival information. This is followed by a list of the musical modifications. Next follows a list of all known recorded versions of the show, with information on record label and release number, artists, and which selections are included. Introductory material includes essays: "The British Musical," by Rexton S. Bunnett, "Australian Theatre on Disc," by Peter Pinne, "The Musical Theatre in Canada--On Stage and On Record," by Glenn Atchison, and "Researching the Pre-LP Original Cast Recording," by Larry Warner. Vol II is an alphabetical index to all personal names noted in the main listing, including composers, lyricists, authors, performers.

**RALPH STANLEY & THE CLINCH MOUNTAIN BOYS: A DISCOGRAPHY**, By John Wright (Evanston, IL: photocopied by author [1983?]), 42 pp., \$3.00 (in North America; \$5.00 overseas, both postpaid). This pamphlet is an LP discography listing all albums on which Ralph Stanley has appeared since 1967, when, after his brother Carter's death, he began his career as solo performer (with band). Albums are listed chronologically, with titles, recording data, and personnel, and information on which if any titles also appeared on singles. An additional page lists albums on which Stanley appeared as guest or supporting artist. (Available from author, 1137 Noyes St., Evanston, 60201.)

**THE BESSIE SMITH COMPANION: A Critical and Detailed Appreciation of the Recordings**, by Edward Brooks (Wheatthampstead, Herts, UK: Cavendish Publ. Co., 1982; and New York: Da Capo). xx + 229 pp.; 4 x 8"; clothcovers; selected bibliography, discography, list of recorded titles; \$22.50. Jazz scholarship/appreciation, which has regularly led and shown the way to followers of blues and hillbilly music, is again in the forefront with a novel combination of both scholarship and critical evaluation/appreciation. In this pocket-size book, Brooks takes his readers through Bessie's 160 recordings in chronological order, commenting on both the lyrics and melody, on Bessie's singing style and the performances of her accompanists, and also on the significance of that particular song as it reflects Bessie's personal vicissitudes. A great deal of what Brooks writes is, like much musical criticism, very subjective, but his deep familiarity with the idiom and the performers, and his consistent avoidance of offensive pontification, make this book a delight to read and, as it was intended, an ideal companion to have at one's fingertips while relistening to the recorded corpus of one of the greatest blues singers of the jazz age. The title-by-title discography includes master and release numbers and recording dates; composer credits, tonal range of the voice, tempo, "essential form" (i.e., 12-, 8-, or 16-bar blues or popular song), and accompanists. The alphabetical list of record titles refers to both text discussion and the discography.

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# THE JEMF

The primary objectives and purposes of the John Edwards Memorial Forum are to further serious study and public recognition of American traditional and vernacular music (country, western, country & western, old-time, hillbilly, bluegrass, cowboy, mountain, sacred, gospel, race, blues, rhythm & blues, jazz, soul, rock, rock & roll, cajun, conjunto, polka, folk, and ethnic-American) disseminated by commercial media such as print, sound recording, film, radio, and television, and to stimulate research in music forms of such music.

The means of providing such education include, but are not limited to, compiling, publishing and distributing discographical, bibliographical, biographical, and historical material as well as critical analysis; reprinting, with permission, pertinent articles, and reissuing historically significant out-of-print sound recordings; cooperating with sister research, education, and archival organizations on developments in traditional and vernacular music; and informing the public on all aspects of such music, with particular emphasis on this music's cultural meaning and value in defining American experience.

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